

# PROVINCETOWN

A R T S

VOLUME 5

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— ANNIE DILLARD

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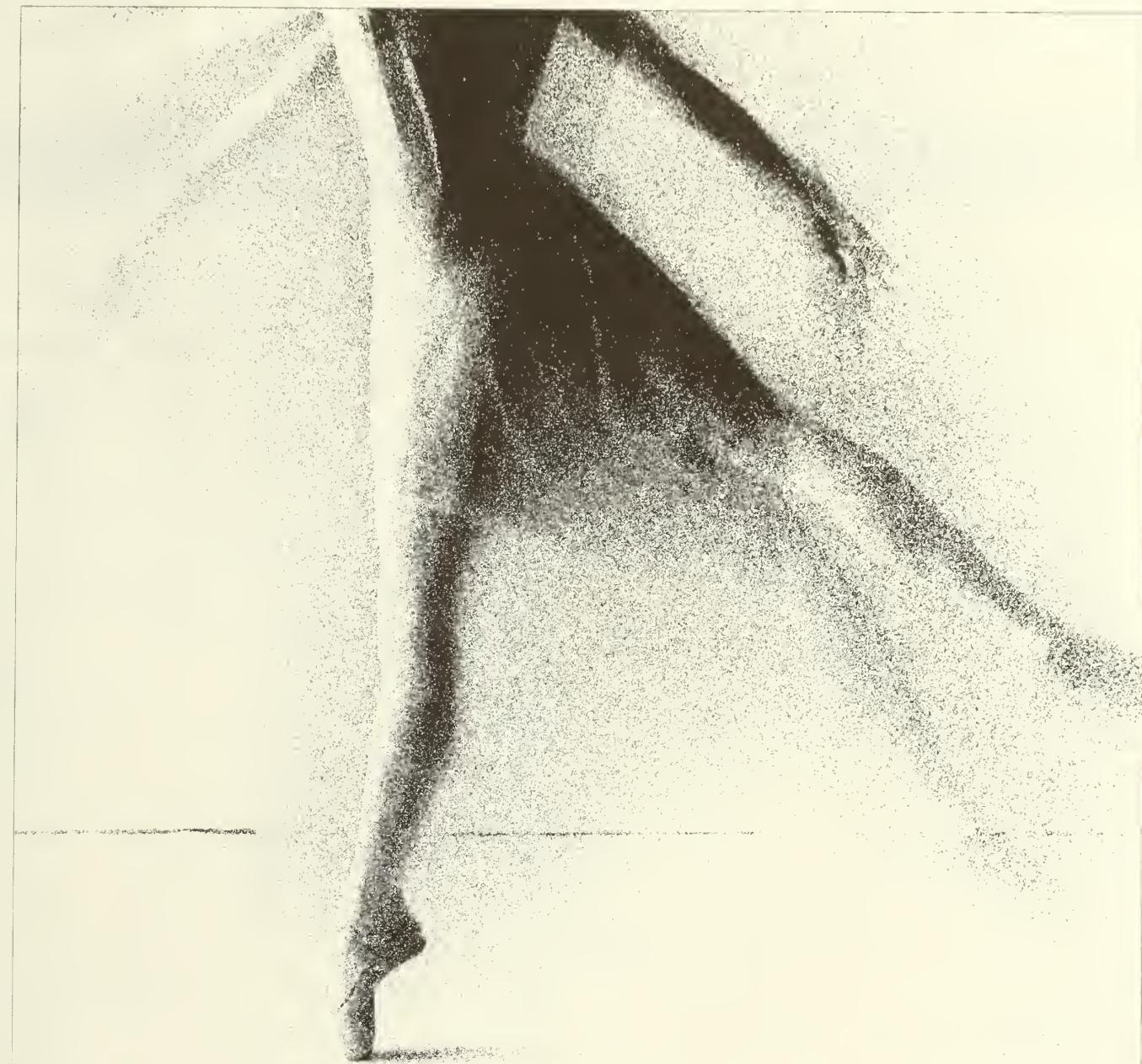


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# PROVINCETOWN

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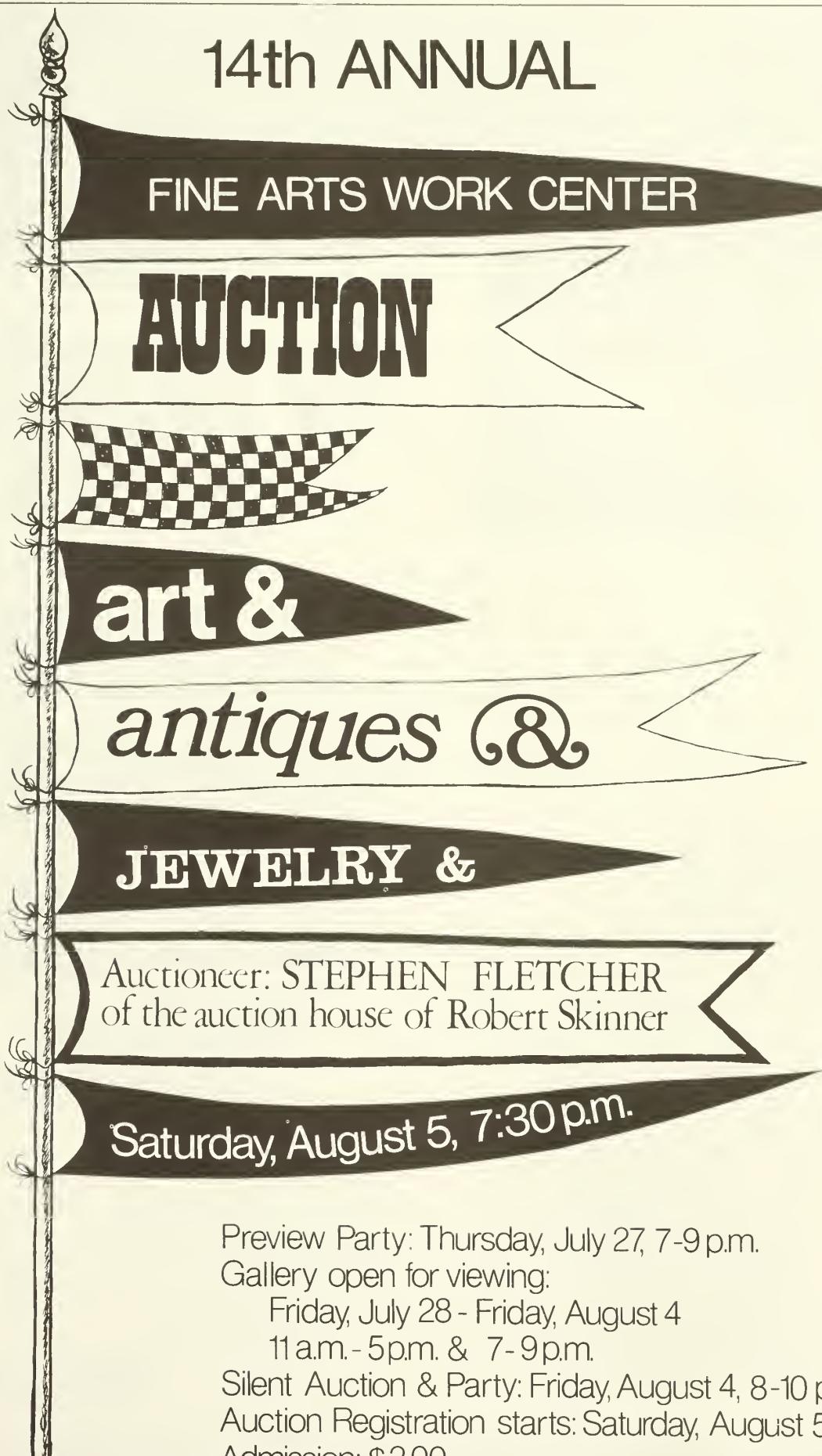
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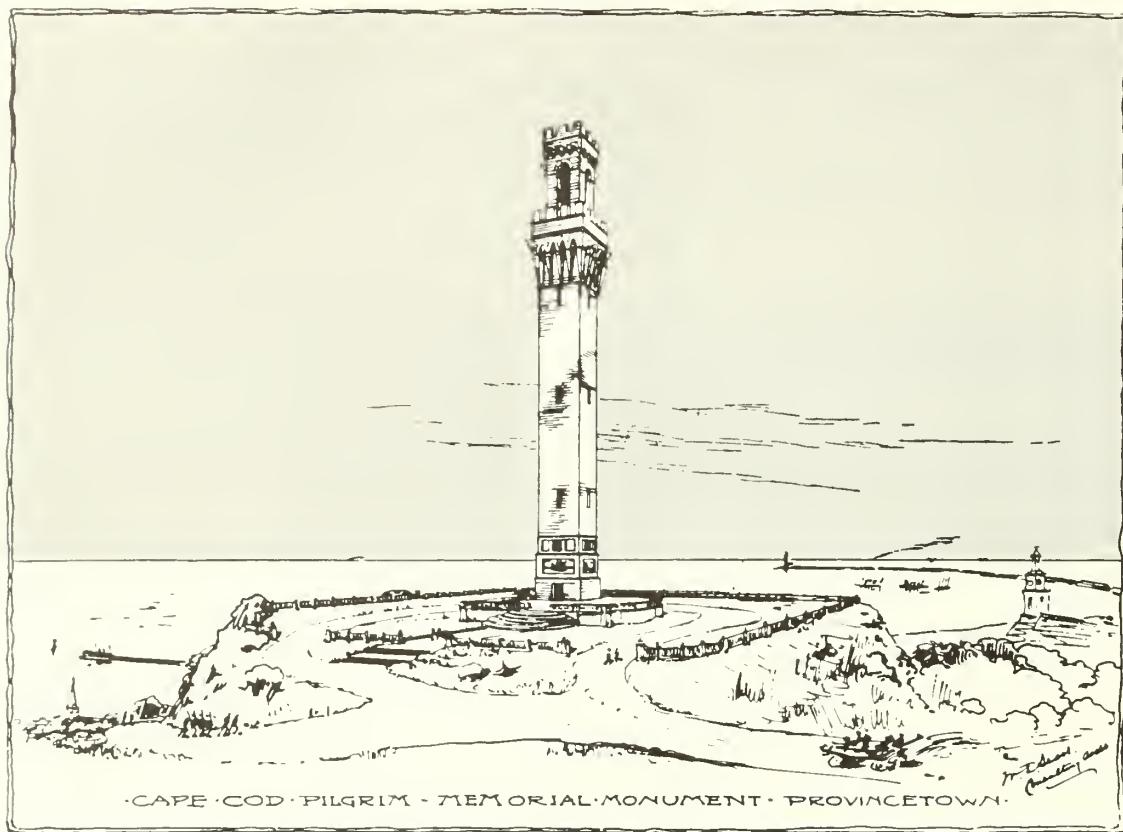
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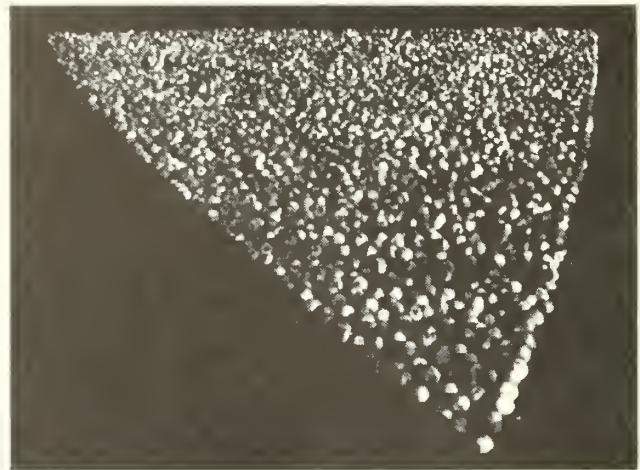
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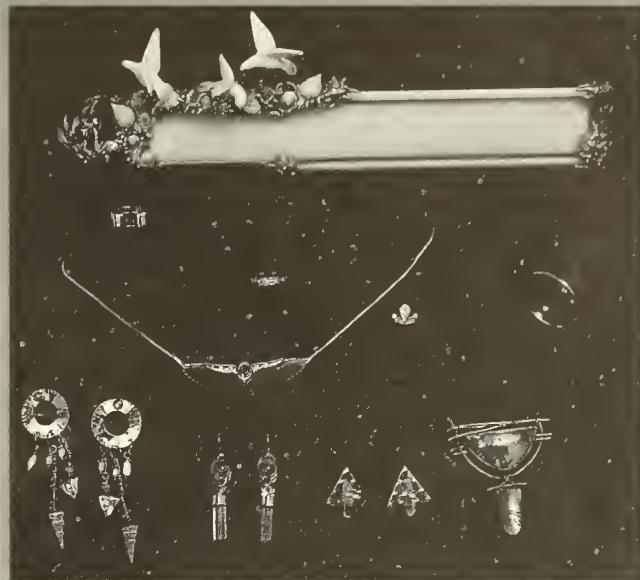
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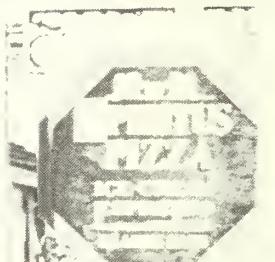
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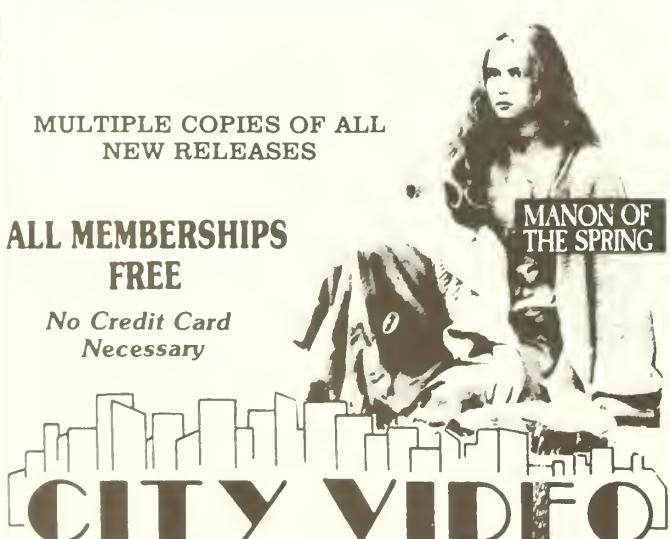
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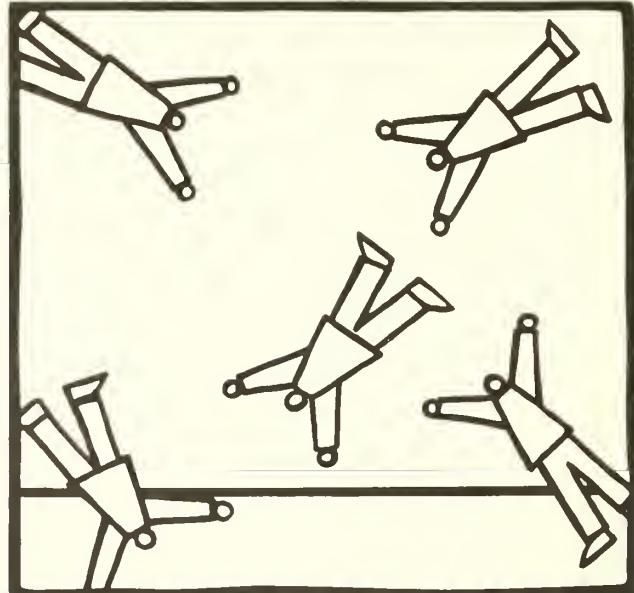
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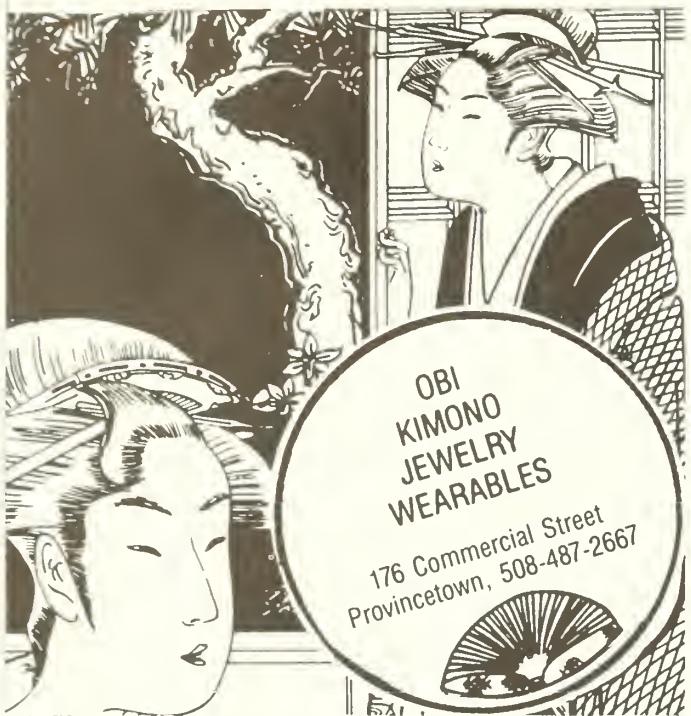
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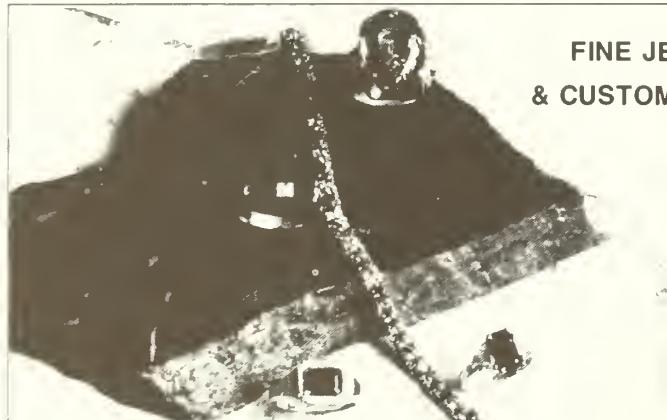
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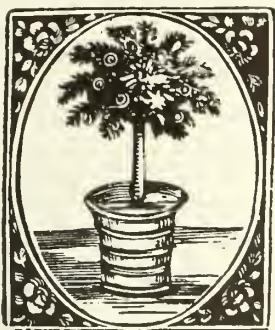
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# Gaps, Fissures, Cliffs and Cracks: *An Appreciation of Annie Dillard*

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By Susan Mitchell

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When I lived in Provincetown, I liked going into the dunes with other writers, but even more with artists. The artists would always return with pieces of world—rough wood chunks gnarled by bent nails, bedraggled gull feathers, pudgy stones, fragments of conch, and bones that seemed to be imitating Henry Moore sculptures. The artists never had enough hands. Their pockets bulged. Everything was loot, and within weeks their studios were so crammed with collections, I would think I was visiting museums with fetishists for curators. The writers, on the other hand, might return with one pebble or one shell. It was nifty the way the ocean could fit into that shell. Writers' rooms looked as if their occupants had just arrived and were waiting for their baggage to catch up. It was apparent the world was disappearing into the artists' studios, and if the writers did not act fast, there would be nothing left for them. Even negative space was going with the objects. Soon there wouldn't be a hole to meditate on. The artists were not only taking the honey, they were filching the combs and nests of paper wasps. They were leaving the light without the lantern.

Of course, the world is up for grabs by writers too—plunder for any thief with the words to carry it off. And besides, there are

writers who are not satisfied with name languages. Like painters and sculptors, they want to get their hands on things. Annie Dillard is a writer more interested than most in what Walter Benjamin called the communication of things. She even titles one volume of essays *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (Harper & Row, 1982), and in the title essay, she writes:

I would like to come back as a *palo santo* tree on the weather side of an island, so that I could be, myself, a perfect witness, and look, mute, and wave my arms. (*Teaching a Stone to Talk*, p. 76)

Those *palo santo* trees remind me of the twisted driftwood the artists lugged back from the dunes, natural sculptures whose forms can only tell the truth—about the wind, the rain, and the sunlight. Because the tree's language is its form, it cannot lie, and it is the *palo santo*'s fierce honesty that Dillard identifies with. From her most recent book, *An American Childhood* (Harper & Row, 1987), it is possible to see that, as an adolescent, Dillard was excited by the pure language of things. Visiting Pittsburgh's Carnegie Institute when she was sixteen, she saw Giacometti's sculpture, "Man Walking," and returned to it Saturday after Saturday:

I drew what I thought of as the perfect person, whose form matched his inner life, and whose name was, Indian style, Man Walking. (*An American Childhood*, p. 212)

# ANNIE DILLARD

*"An American Childhood is a charming and delightful reminiscence that helps cement Annie Dillard's reputation as one of our major writers."*  
—San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle

## AN AMERICAN CHILDHOOD



ANNIE  
DILLARD

AUTHOR OF

*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

The form of "Man Walking" matched his inner life because he "was so skinny his inner life was his outer life"—because "he was in spirit and in form a dissected nerve" (*An American Childhood*, p. 212). The sculpture's honesty is complex: outer life is shaped to the inner, and name follows form. Heidegger would have said that "Man Walking" emerges into the unconcealedness of his being. For Dillard, this unconcealedness represents not only an artistic ideal, but also an ideal life that would shun pretense, hypocrisy, and lies.

So often, when Dillard envisions the ideal life, its distinguishing characteristic is muteness, and therefore, it is usually animals that provoke her:

We could live under the wild rose wild as weasels, mute, and uncomprehending. I could very calmly go wild. I could live two days in the den, curled, leaning on mouse fur, sniffing bird bones, blinking, licking, breathing musk, my hair tangled in the roots of grasses. Down is a good place to go, where the mind is single. Down is out, out of your ever-loving mind and back to your careless senses. I remember muteness as a prolonged and giddy fast, where every moment is a feast of

utterance received. Time and events are merely poured, unremarked, and ingested directly, like blood pulsed into my gut through a jugular vein. Could two live that way? Could two live under the wild rose, and explore by the pond,

so that the smooth mind of each is as everywhere present to the other, and as received and as unchallenged, as falling snow? (*Teaching a Stone to Talk*, pp. 15-16)

If muteness means that separation is overcome, then speech must be the cause of loneliness and alienation. But why should this be? In what way is language a curtain drawn between humans and the rest of the world? A screen separating individuals who might otherwise share a rapturous intimacy? In *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (Harper & Row, 1974), Dillard suggests that even "the tense hum of consciousness" is so much static to animals and birds and sends them into hiding. With humans, there is a continual commenting on, thinking about, questioning, and naming; and this running dialogue shuts out what might be a feast of utterances received. Life becomes heady and invigorating precisely when such inner speech is silenced: "I never knew I was there either," Dillard begins one account of stalking a muskrat at Tinker Creek:

# ANNIE DILLARD

For that forty minutes last night I was purely sensitive and mute as a photographic plate; I received impressions, but I did not print out captions. My own self-awareness had disappeared; it seems now almost as though, had I been wired with electrodes, my EEG would have been flat . . . I have noticed that even a few minutes of this self-forgetfulness is tremendously invigorating. I wonder if we do not waste most of our energy just by spending every waking minute saying Hello to ourselves. Martin Buber quotes an old Hasid master who said, "When you walk across the fields with your mind pure and holy then from all the stones, and all growing things, and all animals, the sparks of their soul come out and cling to you, and then they are purified and become a holy fire in you." (Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, p. 198)

Perhaps those sparks that cling to a person emptied of speech and consciousness are the feast of utterances received. But if they are, why should printing out captions rob humans of a world that wants to be reunited with them? In *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, Dillard describes a visit to the Galapagos, those islands off Ecuador made famous by Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. There, the birds and animals are tame, and, Dillard writes, "You pass among them as though you were wind, spindrift, sunlight, leaves" (*Teaching a Stone to Talk*, p. 113). Mockingbirds scratched at her hair and poked at her bare feet. Sea lions settled next to her on the beach or eagerly called her to their games:

A five-foot sea lion peers intently into your face, then urges her muzzle gently against your underwater mask and searches your eyes without blinking. Next she rolls upside down and slides along the length of your floating body, rolls again, and casts a long glance back at your eyes. You are, I believe, supposed to follow, and think up something clever in return. You can play games with sea lions in the water using shells or bits of leaf, if you are willing. You can spin on your vertical axis and a sea lion will swim circles around you, keeping her face always six inches from yours, as though she were tethered. You can make a game of touching their back flippers, say, and the sea lions will understand at once; somersaulting conven-

iently before your clumsy hands, they will give you an excellent field of back flippers.

And when you leave the water, they follow. They don't want you to go. They porpoise to the shore, popping their heads up when they lose you and casting about, then speeding to your side and emitting a choked series of vocal notes. If you won't relent, they disappear, barking; but if you sit on the beach with so much as a foot in the water, two or three will station with you, floating on their backs and saying, Urr. (*Teaching a Stone to Talk*, pp. 116-17)

Whenever I read this passage I have the feeling that I am about to remember something from my own life. Perhaps it is a childhood memory of playing with other children or playing with a parent in the ocean. Or perhaps it is the memory of a dream that this description nearly dislodges from the bottom of forgetfulness. If not a personal memory, then maybe it is the possibility of oneness that has not yet been stripped from my genes, a possibility that returns to me as the recollection of a prelapsarian world. The play of the sea lions seems deeper than amusement or entertainment: it is not merely a diversion. It is engagement in the now, a language so purely in the present tense that it is bound to be richer and more intense than dimly envisioned future possibilities or a hazily remembered past. The language of play does not offer itself

as a substitute for anything; it is not a sign accepted in place of an absent thing. What this language offers is what you get, what you already have your hands on, a life continually present.

With the help of name languages, it is possible to edit out the world almost entirely and relinquish all those feelings that cling to sensuous reality—mystery, wonder, awe, grandeur, bliss, intensity. It's so easy to substitute a name for a thing. The most specific advice that Dillard gives for discovering the world's natural syntax comes at the end of *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*:

Ezekiel excoriates false prophets as those who have "not gone up into the gaps." The gaps are the thing. The gaps are the spirit's one home, the altitudes and latitudes so dazzlingly spare and clean that the spirit can discover itself for the first time like a once-blind man unbound. The gaps are the cliffs in the rock

"Annie Dillard...auchingly transcends all other writers of our day."  
—R. Buckminster Fuller

## TEACHING A STONE TO TALK

► EXPEDITIONS AND ENCOUNTERS ▲



ANNIE  
DILLARD

AUTHOR OF

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek & An American Childhood

# ANNIE DILLARD

where you cower to see the back parts of God; they are the fissures between mountains and cells the wind lances through, the icy narrowing fiords splitting the cliffs of mystery. Go up into the gaps. If you can find them; they shift and vanish too. Stalk the gaps. Squeak into a gap in the soil, turn, and unlock—more than a maple—a universe. (*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, pp. 268-69)

For a long time, this passage baffled me, but now I think of those gaps as territory unclaimed by language, regions so remote no verb has been able to penetrate, no noun has cast its shadow. In such places, an idea might writhe up like flame or branch, lightning in several directions at once. A thought might suffuse the mind with mist. It might scorch or freeze the thinker. A gap could also be a place where all previously held concepts no longer make sense, where the cages are too big or too small to hold the birds. The first time I looked at a grain of sand under a microscope I was amazed at the space it contained. In each grain was a hole worth meditating on, especially since the hole seemed to be supporting green pillars and columns, the crystals. Until then, I had not realized how solid space was, how tough, how kickable. When I pinched a grain of sand, that space was not crushed.

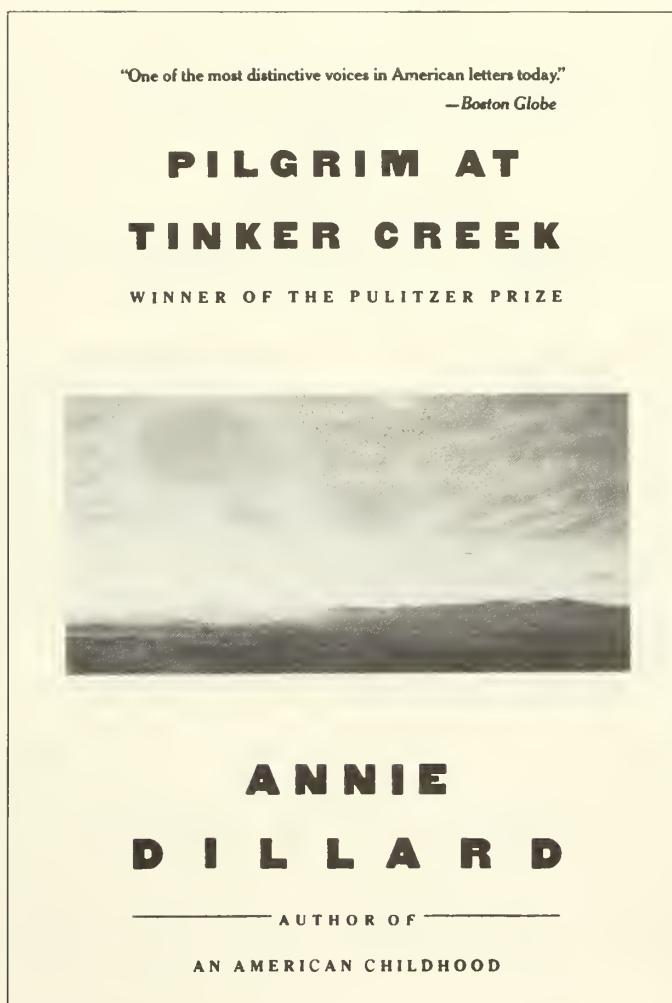
Of course, it's one thing to see and still another to transmit the vision glimpsed in a gap. Dillard's "A Field of Silence" seems written for a gap or tear in the fabric of ordinary experience, from an altered state of consciousness that had no need for language or even such conventional concepts as time and space. For several minutes, the world seemed taken by surprise, caught in the act of being so fully itself that everything appeared strange and unfamiliar—the isolated farm where Dillard had been staying, its roosters, its fields and fencing, the farmer's wife. Even "the pastures on either side of the road turned green in a surrealistic fashion, monstrous, impeccable, as if they were holding their breaths" (*Teaching a Stone to Talk*, p. 135). The natural world appears poised for revelation, appears to be contracting its muscles so powerfully that the very tick and tock of Time has stopped. But if this is the silence that precedes utterance, the utterance is itself the fields of silence, and even when Dillard hears the farmer's wife whistling, each note only rings

out more and more silence:

It must have been she who was whistling and heaping on top of the silence those hollow notes of song. But the slow sound of the music—the beautiful sound of the music ringing the air like a stone bell—was isolate and detached. The notes spread into the general air and became the weightier part of silence, silence's last straw. The distant woman and her wheelbarrow were flat and detached, like mechanized and pink-painted properties for a stage. I stood in pieces, afraid I was unable to move. Something had unhinged the world. The houses and roadsides and pastures were buckling under the silence. Then a Labrador, black, loped up the distant driveway, fluid and cartoonlike, toward the pink woman. I had to try to turn away. Holiness is a force, and like the others can be resisted. It was given, but I didn't want to see it, God or no God. It was as if God had said, "I am here, but not as you have known me. This is the look of silence, and of loneliness unendurable; it too has always been mine, and now will be yours." I was not ready for a life of sorrow, sorrow deriving from knowledge I could just as well stop at the gate. (*Teaching a Stone to Talk*, pp. 136-37)

For a few minutes, the world is reconceptualized. Silence, normally understood as the absence of sound or as the interval

between sounds, loses its temporal dimension and enters the spatial realm. This silence has so much weight and heaviness a sculptor could cast it in bronze. It even replaces gravity as the force holding objects to the earth; but where gravity pulls, this force presses down. Of course, if language is abandoned, then silence would take on unusual weight. Instead of a world held together by words and concepts, there would be a defamiliarized world—and a self in fragments because the running dialogue, the thinking about and commenting on, is probably what holds the self and its world together. But once language drops away, wouldn't God come unnamed? And is this the revelation? Or is all this strangeness a metaphor for what it feels like to see the world into newness? A god unnamed would no longer be a personal god—a Christ or a Buddha or a Yahweh. An unnamed god would no longer be a divinity that has been written



# ANNIE DILLARD

about. This god would be as impersonal as fields of silence. If this experience was the revelation of deity as impersonal, as the Holy, then it would explain Dillard's feelings of unbearable loneliness—and explain why she wanted to stop this knowledge at the gate.

What comes of experiences like this one? Dillard concludes her essay by remaining inconclusive: "What all this means about perception, or language, or angels, or my own sanity, I have no idea" (*Teaching a Stone to Talk*, p. 138). I respect Dillard's refusal to interpret an experience that, it is tempting to think, might better have been given to an artist whose ideas of space would have been revolutionized. Very often, such radical shifts in seeing lead to major breakthroughs for painters and sculptors, and Giacometti has, in fact, written about crossing a threshold into a world he had never seen before:

When I woke up this morning, I saw my towel for the very first time: a weightless cloth in a stillness which had never been perceived before, suspended, as it were, in a terrible silence. There was no longer any connection between it and the chair or the table, whose legs, barely touching the floor, were no longer supported by anything; there was nothing linking these objects, separated from each other by immeasurable voids. I looked around my room in terror, and a cold sweat ran up and down my spine.<sup>1</sup>

Though Giacometti's vision is secular, it nevertheless has the intensity of mystical revelation. Names and concepts domesticate the world, taming it to dull familiarity. Freed from its name, a table is no longer bound to keep all four legs on the floor, and ordinary objects, restored to their original anonymity, withdraw from one another. Perhaps names keep the world in a state of unnatural extroversion. But Giacometti only appears to wake effortlessly into his fresh way of seeing objects in space. In fact, he had been thinking for twenty-five years about the effect that distance has on the size of things, and it was the accumulative force of his thinking that finally pushed him to insight. If objects, unnamed, shrink into introspection, then the spaces between them, the voids, would of course become larger and seem immeasurable. Giacometti's sculptures show people to be small, thin, attenuated, as if vanishing

into a distance that keeps getting bigger—or thrown off balance, as if space were sucking them up.

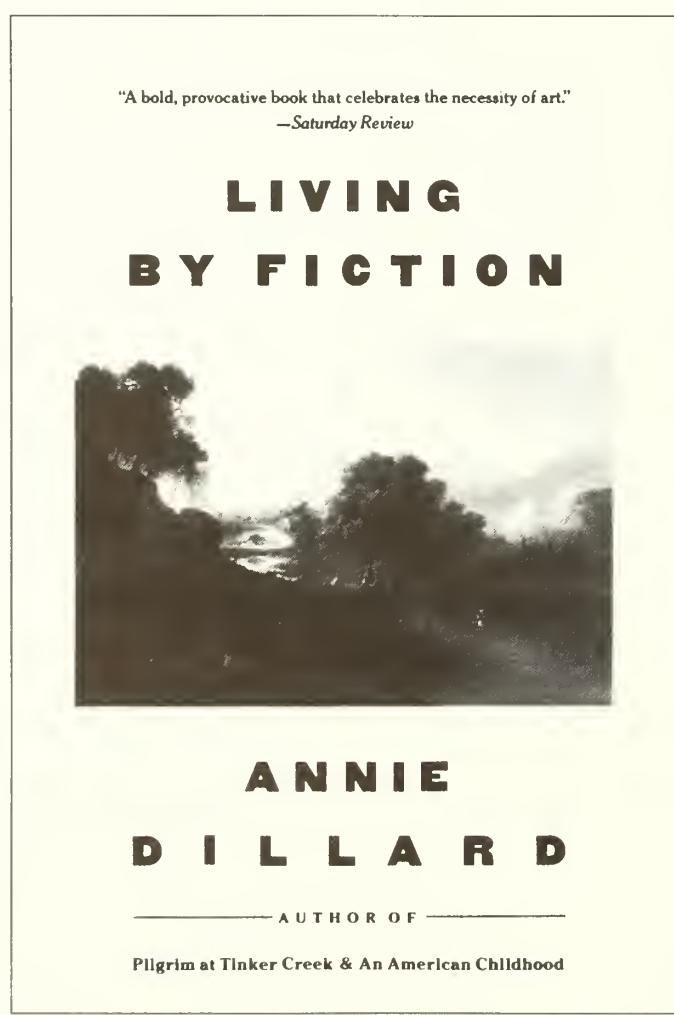
Like Giacometti, Dillard had been preoccupied with the subject of seeing before she had the experience described in "A Field of Silence." After reading Marius von Senden's *Space and Sight*, she practiced seeing the world as those born blind see it once surgery has given them sight. "Everything looks flat with dark patches," von Senden reports one girl as saying, while another sees her hand as "something bright and then holes" (*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, pp. 25-29). For weeks after reading von Senden, Dillard kept trying to pry seeing loose from understanding, or as she put it, to "unpeach the peaches."

What Dillard has succeeded in reconceptualizing is the essay, for she has always resisted the kind of purist thinking that would keep the genres apart. Genre is really a spatial concept, and perhaps for that reason it tends to bring out the territorial prerogative in writers. The first day at writers' conferences the inevitable question is: Are you a fiction writer, a poet, or a nonfiction writer? Stake your claim. Good fences make good neighbors. But what of the born straddlers, the bridge builders, the tunnelers, and loop-the-loop specialists? The conceptual artist Robert Smithson came out strongly against generic classifications in the visual arts:

The categorizing of art into painting, architecture and sculpture seems to be one of the most unfortunate things that took place. Now all of these categories are splintering into more and more categories, and it's like an interminable avalanche of categories.<sup>2</sup>

Like Smithson, Dillard rejects sectarian thinking and in her introduction to *Best American Essays 1988* (Ticknor & Fields, 1988), she argues that "The essay can do everything a poem can do, and everything a short story can do" (xvii). In fact, says Dillard:

The essay is, and has been all over the map. There's nothing you cannot do with it; no subject matter is forbidden, no structure is proscribed. You get to make up your own structure every time, a structure that arises from the materials and best contains them. The material is the world itself, which, so far, keeps on keeping on. The



# ANNIE DILLARD

thinking mind will analyze, and the creative imagination will link instances, and time itself will churn out scenes—scenes unnoticed and lost, or scenes remembered, written, and saved. (*Best American Essays 1988*, p. xxii)

Of all the literary forms, the essay is the most voracious for mingle-mangle, for hotchpot and chowchow, and as a result it has the energy of “material messes.” Dillard uses this term in a short diatribe against purity, and what it suggests to me is—heap, hoard, plunder, unsifted booty, and all those strange and wonderful finds the Provincetown artists carried back from the dunes. In *Living by Fiction* (Harper & Row, 1982), Dillard argues for plenitude over purity:

When the art object contains a wealth of varied materials, it can act. The coherent relationships among those materials serve as a kind of rocket fuel, so to speak, which propels the object into regions it explores. But when the object is only a theoretical mock-up of those regions—when

it presents only those relationships whose structures are already known—then nothing of the universe can be learned. (*Living by Fiction*, p. 171)

The essay does not aspire to be pure; its impurity is its fuel. It aspires toward gaps—wilderness territory, uncharted regions—and the surest way to reach them is with its mouth full of world. □□

*Susan Mitchell* has published poems in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *APR*, and *The Nation*. She is the author of a book of poems, *The Water Inside The Water* (Wesleyan).

1. As quoted in Charles Juliet, *Giacometti* (New York: Universe Books, 1986), p. 63.
2. Robert Smithson, “What Is A Museum? A Dialogue between Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson,” *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 64.

“Annie Dillard is a poet.”—Loren Eiseley, *Washington Post Book World*

## TICKETS FOR A PRAYER WHEEL



ANNIE  
DILLARD

AUTHOR OF

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek & An American Childhood

“A book of great richness, beauty and power.”  
—Frederick Buechner, *New York Times Book Review*

## HOLY THE FIRM



ANNIE  
DILLARD

AUTHOR OF

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek & An American Childhood

PROVINCETOWN—1959

*Photographs*  
*By*  
*Fred McDarrah*

*Fred McDarrah, the Village Voice photographer whose documentary record of the Beat Poets and the irascible Abstract Expressionists captured those generations before they became self-conscious of their absorption into the very culture they opposed, came to Provincetown in the summer of '59.*

*Some of the photographs he took were published in The Artist's World, his now classic book on the early days of the New York School. The Artist's World was reissued last year by Shapolsky Publishers in New York. Preparing the recent edition, McDarrah discovered 50 Provincetown photographs never before published. A selection of them appear here for the first time.*



FRED McDARRAH, 1959

## PROVINCETOWN—1959



FRANZ KLINE AND ALEX KATZ



JOANNE ROSE AND SID GORDON

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## PROVINCETOWN—1959

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HANS HOFMANN

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PROVINCETOWN—1959

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ANGELO IPPOLITO

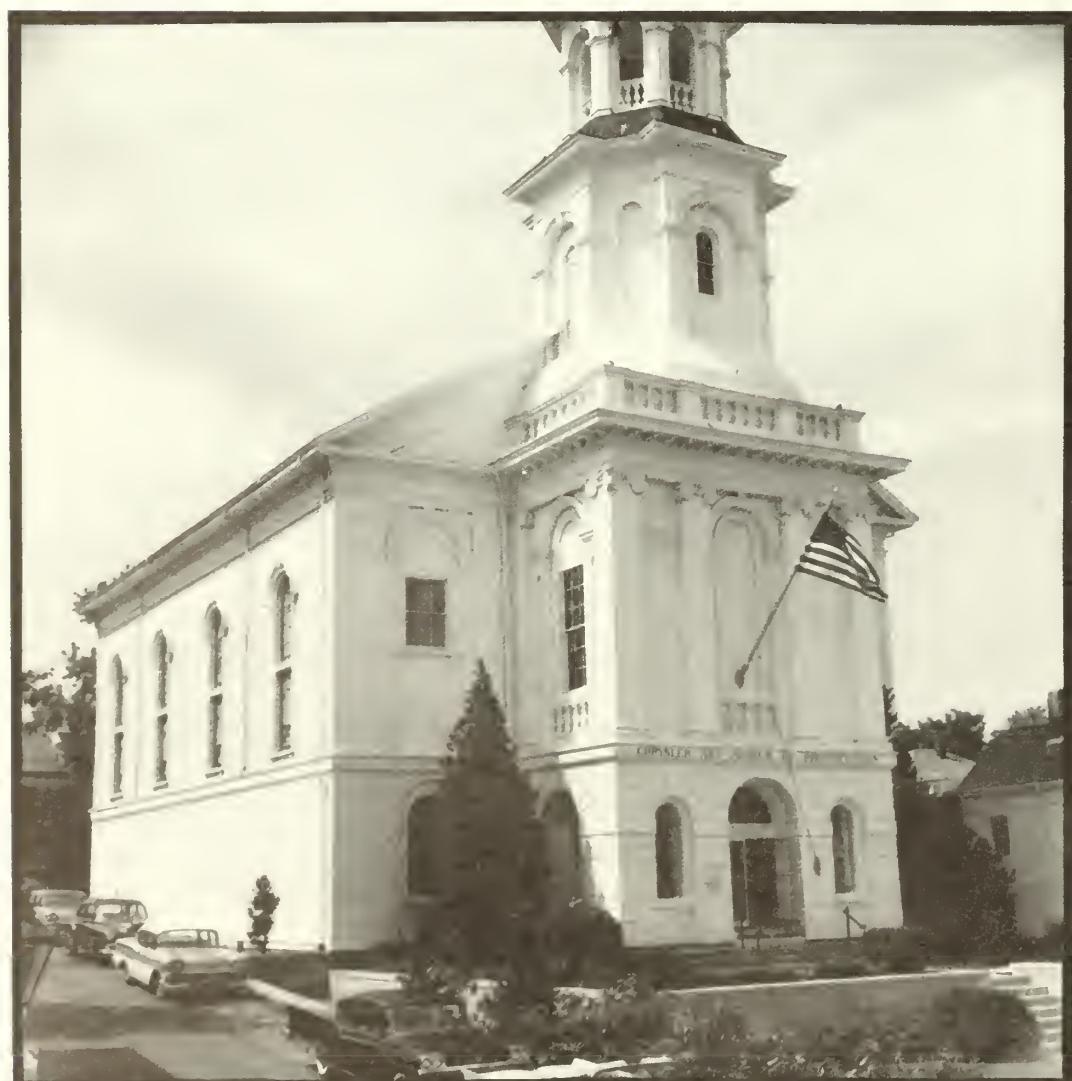
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## PROVINCETOWN—1959

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INSIDE THE CHRYSLER MUSEUM



THE CHRYSLER MUSEUM

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## PROVINCETOWN—1959

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THE TIRCA KARLIS GALLERY



IVAN KARP IN FRONT OF THE HCE GALLERY

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## PROVINCETOWN—1959



INSIDE THE A-HOUSE



BOB TIEGER (WITH CIGARETTE) TALKING TO MYRON STOUT

## PROVINCETOWN—1959



THE PETER BUSA SCHOOL OF FINE ART—NOW PART OF THE FINE ARTS WORK CENTER

# LEWIS BERGMAN

## *Tribute to an Editor*

**A**n editor's work is almost invisible. Sometimes he removes commas with the worn eraser of a stubby pencil. At other times, his task is to help the writer pull a story out of himself. A former editor of both the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* and *across the board*, a magazine for leading business executives, Lewis Bergman was also a summer resident of Provincetown for over 40 years.

In talking with friends, Lewis would suddenly shift character and begin speaking in a thick Indian accent, sounding like Gandhi or Med Vehta. His tan face seemed baked by Calcutta sun as he insisted that he was "a failed holy man" who had left India to live in America. Provincetown he praised as a place of "great natural beauty and almost unnatural tolerance. That's what makes it so appealing."

Daniel Schwarz, former Sunday editor of the *Times*, said, "Remembering Lewis is like remembering a beloved actor we have seen on stage and screen all our lives. But when we recall the actor, we know we are recalling the roles he played, not the real man. And when we remember Lewis, are we remembering the real Lewis?"

Months before he died, Lewis told his second wife, Marybeth, "I have come to realize that the only close death you ever get over is your own." In memorial services held last year in New York and

Provincetown shortly after his sudden death, his friends remembered him.

### **William Honan**

When Lewis became seriously ill in February, Marybeth told me that he said to her, "Look, if anything happens to me, consider it a trial separation."

In one of the last telephone conversations I had with Lewis, I asked what sort of treatment he was getting, and he said, "I'm wandering around the city looking for a church called Our Lady of Permanent Remission."

After Lewis retired from the *Times*, where he had been supervising a staff of 30 for a great many years, he became editor of *across the board*, where he had a staff of two. And he said, "My staff is now so small I have to kiss my own behind."

Lewis used to pick up the telephone in his office when Jane Weston or Gwin Chin weren't there to answer it, and say, "Hello, psychiatry!"

About a decade ago, Lewis published a series of predictions in the *New York Times Magazine*, some of which were mentioned in his obituary. He predicted that a couple of Soviet astronauts making a forced landing at 4 A.M. in Central Park would get mugged.

He predicted that at long last the United Nations would agree on a defini-

tion of an aggressor: an aggressor is a cannibal who eats his fellow human beings when he is not really hungry.

Lewis predicted that the Pope would call on Jews and Arabs to take a more Christian attitude toward one another.

Lewis also predicted that in the future, the Institute for Sex Research at the University of Indiana would disclose the results of two years of experiments conducted with 1328 volunteer pairs, most of them faculty wives and moonlighting teaching assistants.

On the whole, he wrote, the data would show that the respiration rate increases dramatically during successful coitus, then subsides.

Now I know that the foregoing was not disrespectful in a memorial service because so much of the Lewis we all knew and loved was quick wit, the mirthfulness, the sheer delight in the contradictions, the folly and the craziness of human existence. And it is appropriate that we should recall that as we recall him.

However, I also do want to say something just a bit serious. I have long considered myself extremely fortunate to have—just through dumb luck, I guess—worked with just about all of the great, the truly great editors of my time. Many of them are here in this room today. And in my book, Lewis Bergman belongs to that upper echelon of the pantheon of truly



**Lewis Bergman, 1918 - 1988**

## LEWIS BERGMAN

great editors. Why is that? Well, Lewis Bergman was a truly great editor because he cast out fresh and scintillating ideas the way a shaggy dog, emerging from a swim, shakes itself and makes the air glisten and sparkle. With Lewis, it was just that effortless and natural.

He had an uncanny, mysterious, mischievous, unfathomable, amazing eye for the unexpected, the surprising, the strangely mesmerizing. He was always interrupting the conversation, a conversation that was rushing along thoughtlessly, by saying: "That's a story. Hey, you know, there's a story in that."

Here's a story some of you may not know. Lewis was responsible for opening up the *New York Times Magazine* so that it could put even a movie star on the cover.

He was the most modest of men, but I kind of wormed this story out of him long ago. It could be apocryphal, but I think it's true. This took place back in the days when to get your picture on the cover of the *Times Magazine*, you had to be a secretary of state, or Haillie Salassie, or Mt. Rushmore.

At this particular time, the late Turner Catledge had just become executive director, and he was a very great editor but, as Lewis told me the story, Turner assumed the enormous responsibilities of executive editor of the entire newspaper rather late in life. Consequently, once a week, after spending a busy day fretting over the secretary of state, Haillie Salassie, and Mt. Rushmore, Turner would come up to the eighth floor and attend a magazine meeting. About halfway through the meeting, Turner's head would begin to nod and pretty soon he would be asleep. Well, one day Lewis had received a profile of a movie star which he had commissioned, and it was an editor's dream come true. It was actually interesting to read. It was well written. And, unlike just about

every profile of a movie star you've ever read, this one had redeeming social value.

I don't remember who it was about—Ingrid Bergman or maybe Katharine Hepburn—but it had everything, and so Lewis proposed at the magazine meeting that this profile was so remarkable that it was time for this august newspaper to cast off the shackles of the past and put this highly entertaining and deeply significant piece on the cover.

Just as he came to the climax of his

memoirs that one of his most important accomplishments as executive editor had been to set a new precedent in permitting all sorts of stories, even profiles of movie stars, to appear on the cover of the magazine.

Lewis Bergman was a truly great editor because he knew when not to edit. I can hear him now saying, "Don't do anything too elaborate. If you work too hard at editing, you're probably doing too much editing. Punch [Sulzberger] isn't going to cut your salary because you didn't wear out your pencil this month. Leave it be."

Lewis Bergman was a truly great editor because he was the implacable foe of what decency requires us to refer to in these premises as male bovine defecation. H. L. Menken used to call it cant. Whatever it was, Lewis could detect it even when other editors, fine and talented editors, would read right over it and not recognize it.

When it was fashionable for hip writers to say there's no difference at all between my cocaine and your martini; when it was fashionable to say that the horrors of a determinedly murderous dictatorship were not really much different from the social accidents of a democracy; when it was fashionable to write that the commission of a violent act was only fair repayment for what used to be called the greater violence; when it was fashionable to brand one or another American politician (other than George Lincoln Rockwell) a fascist; Lewis would say, "Hold on, that's male bovine defecation. And you can't let that stain this newspaper."

He did not have a childish sense of wonder which is indiscriminate. He had a highly sophisticated adult sense of wonder. There were some things and some people that did not arouse his wonder one little bit. I have a feeling he would not have had much wonder about a certain

*Lewis Bergman was a truly great editor because he knew when not to edit. He would say, "Punch isn't going to cut your salary because you didn't wear out your pencil this month."*

presentation, Turner's head began to nod, and then suddenly everybody around the table began congratulating Turner for his daring and fateful decision. Turner woke with a start, and although he realized that he'd approved something quite unusual, he was too embarrassed to inquire what it was and so it came to pass.

Afterwards, Turner received much praise, and years later he declared in his

## TRIBUTE

politician's acceptance speech last night.

Now I would like to conclude by telling you about a message and a challenge that Lewis left us with. It is contained in the last piece he wrote for the *Times*. This appeared five years ago. It was a piece for the travel section about his beloved Provincetown. At the end of this essay, he turned to a subject which those of you who knew him well were aware was an almost constant, constant preoccupation with him, and that was the possibility of nuclear destruction.

Lewis was worried about that because even though he could make fun of Cape Cod as a continental afterthought and ridicule the sea and the sky as cheap imitations of a Milton Avery painting, he really loved all of that very much and did not wish to see it all ground up into nuclear dust.

Now, how you work such thoughts as these into a purely service story about a tourist destination for the travel section and do it in such a way that the editors up there cannot excise it, takes, to say the least, a degree of skill that only a master journalist such as Lewis possessed.

If you listen carefully, perhaps you can discover how he did it. Lewis wrote that one of the things he loved to do in Provincetown was go to the breakwater at the western edge of town and pick mussels. He had been to the breakwater recently, he reported, and was astonished to find that a great tribe of starfish had moved in also. And they were busily doing what starfish do.

Lewis watched the process with fascination. He said it was just as the nature books say: A starfish would grip a mussel, then slowly pry apart the two shells, then extrude its stomach into the open shells and enjoy a repast of *moule marinara*.

Lewis called that a marvelous example of adaptation. A real evolutionary success. But, he said, the starfish deserved

neither credit nor blame for this amazing and horrific feat because the starfish were only doing what they had been genetically encoded to do.

Then Lewis recalled reading what he described as a disturbing statement by a behavioral biologist. This learned biologist had declared that attachment to one's group and fear and hostility toward strangers, which were genetically encoded in humankind, had greatly contributed to the success of the human species over the

*It was his sense of his profession, of his interest in life as an ongoing news story, that made him stimulating to be with and to work with.*

eon. However, in the nuclear age, this behavior, that had proved so successful in the past, had come to constitute the ultimate peril to the species.

"Well," said Lewis, "that peril need not destroy us. A starfish may have to do what a starfish has to do, but human beings probably have more free will than that." Even in Provincetown, he wrote, there is free will.

Lewis Bergman wanted us to know that on the evolutionary scale, we are a good deal more upwardly mobile than starfish.

*William Honan is a New York Times editor specializing in cultural news.*

### **Martha Lear**

Much as I cherished him as a friend, my thinking now turns to him as an editor—as the editor, the one you always remember, the one indispensable teacher. Often I would talk to other writers who had worked with him, and always we would agree that he was simply the best editor any of us had ever known. This was common ground among us, and it should be on the record that he was the best. I don't know how he did it. I don't know his magic tricks, and maybe he didn't know them either, but what Lewis could do was lead us quite gently in directions that clarified and amplified our own thinking so that what we gave him back was better than we had thought we could do. It was the best of ourselves, and it was thanks to him.

*Martha Lear, the author of *Heartsounds*, has written numerous articles for the New York Times Magazine.*

### **B. H. Friedman**

During the years 1963 through 1981, when Abby and I summered in Provincetown, I thought of it as a beautiful place for work relieved by fun. The fun

was, of course, swimming in the bay and at nearby ocean beaches, playing tennis at what was then mystifyingly called The Provincetown Yacht and Tennis Club, and drinking and eating with friends. Lewis Bergman was part of these activities, part of the fun. In those years, there seemed to be almost constant parties, small and large, even a few weddings, but no funerals or

*(continued on page 163)*

# Raphael Soyer, 1899-1987

*When you lose a friend like Raphael Soyer, you lose half of your body, half of your mind.*

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### By Chaim Gross

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When you lose a friend like Raphael Soyer, you lose half of your body, half of your mind. We were friends, and we were very good friends since 1921 when I arrived in America. I was 17 years old and studying art when I met Moses Soyer at the Educational Alliance Art School.

At that time, there was a break from the academic art school, the National Academy of Design. The younger students wanted to do more interesting work besides drawing only with a pencil. Among the radical younger artists at the Educational Alliance Art School were Saul Baizerman, Adolph Gottlieb, Peter Blume, and Barnett Newman. Raphael Soyer decided to go to Cooper Union and later the Art Students League. Moses was the only one in my class who spoke Yiddish. My only language was Yiddish. We took many

walks together, and he taught me English. The Soyer family had come from Russia in 1912. Their first home in New York was in the Bronx. They were very poor.

Moses brought me home to his house on Boone Avenue in the Bronx, and I became friends with his twin brother, Raphael, his sisters, his brother Isaac, his mama and papa, and his grandmother. I was just one of them. I could come up any time and have a meal.

When we had free time, on Saturdays or Sundays, Raphael, Moses, Isaac, and I would go to Coney Island, Sea Gate, the Manhattan piers, or we would go all over the Bronx, every street. We drew and painted.

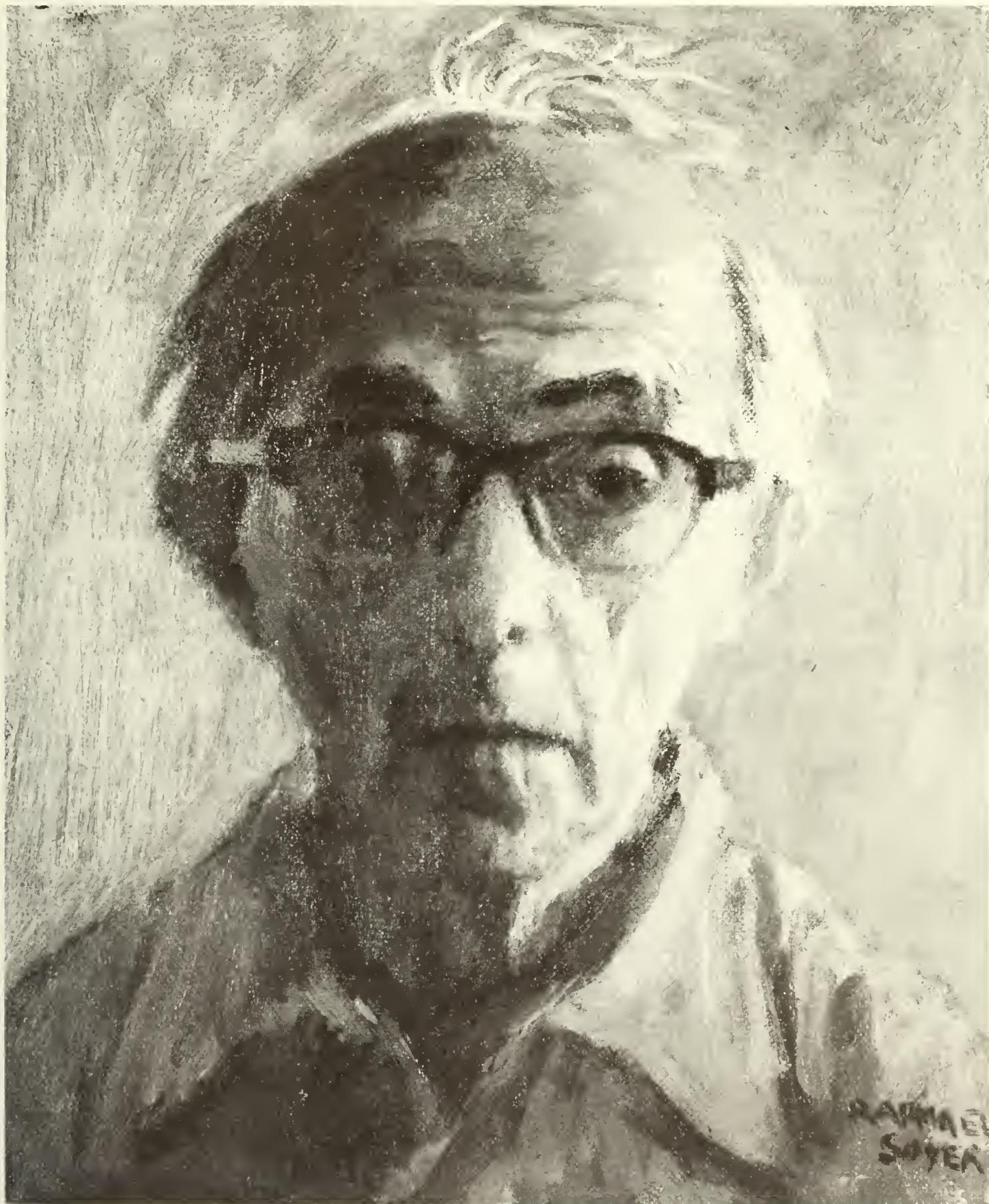
I had my first little studio on Fourteenth Street. It was four feet by eight feet. Raphael Soyer gave me the mattress, and I got some apple boxes; this was my bed. Raphael had a little studio nearby, and he would come to visit me every week to see me and to see how I was doing.

One day, a young artist we knew, Abraham Goldberg, came from Paris. Every year he would spend the summer in Paris, then return to New York and work at the "bonus embroidery" trade. "Bonus embroidery" is done by machine; you copy the drawing. Goldberg suggested that Raphael and I go to the school. We paid our \$15 and learned the trade. After two weeks, the head of the school sent us to a shop where we could work. The man gave us work to do, and we worked there the whole day. When it came to the evening, he said, "You're fired! You spoiled all the goods that's worthwhile!" We went to another shop. We worked the whole day. In the evening, the boss said, "You're fired! The work is no good. I can't give you any money," and tore our work up into pieces. We didn't do well. This was going on all week. By the sixth day, we became lucky: someone was a little sympathetic toward us and said we would learn. He started us off on cheap

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## TRIBUTE

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**SELF PORTRAIT, 1979**

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## TRIBUTE

work and we received \$10. Later we received a little more, and then a little more. After three months, we saved up \$400, and we had enough to live on for the winter. We never went back to the shop again.

We had a friend by the name of Jack Friedlander; he was the only one who had money among our group of eight or ten artists, including Raphael, Moses, Louis Rebach, Harry Zitter, Saul Berman, and myself. We used to get together after sunset and go to Jack Friedlander's studio. One fellow would buy the cabbage, a few carrots, and other things to make a soup; another would cook it; the other wash the dishes, another sweep the floor. After dinner, we would draw one another and play chess for money.

Raphael was the only one who was left in the studio to paint in the daytime. He would get \$15 a week and leave a painting for Friedlander every so often.

We used to go sometimes to the famous Vaudeville House at Astor Place. We made some drawings; then we would go to Jack Friedlander's lithography shop where he had a small press. We did our first lithographs there; most of the subjects were vaudeville and circus scenes. Some still exist; Raphael and I had a few.

**I**n the summer, the group of friends would go to Coney Island. It wasn't like it is now. There were a lot of little squatters' shanties along the water, and we used to love to sketch them, sometimes make watercolors.

One Sunday, our group went to Coney Island. We could see Sea Gate. So, Peter Blume tried to swim there, but the tide was so strong he had a hard time and almost couldn't come back.

One of the painters in our clique, Saul Berman, used to deliver newspapers. He got me a job on the weekend delivering newspapers. It didn't last long. While Berman was delivering newspapers on Riverside Drive, he met a man, Hymie Cohen, who used to take his little dog for an airing. They started talking, he asked Berman what he was doing, and Berman said he was an artist. "Oh, you're an

artist! Tell me, I was recently at the Downtown Gallery, and I saw a piece of sculpture by a fellow, name sounds like Chaim Gross."

"Oh," Berman says, "he's a good friend of mine. We don't know what happened to him."

So, Raphael Soyer and Sol Berman broke into my studio and sold a piece of sculpture for \$100. When I came back from washing dishes in Atlantic City, I called Jack Friedlander. "Hello, Jake," I said.

"Chaim, you must commit suicide."

I said, "Why?" He told me the story of them selling my sculpture on the basis that I was dead. My first sale.

Later I met Hymie Cohen. He visited me on Fourteenth Street. He took another sculpture and paid me \$100. I became friends with him. I said, "I have a good friend; he's a wonderful artist. He's nearby on Fourteenth Street. Let's go over and look at his paintings." Raphael sold him a beautiful big painting for \$35.

Raphael was a very good student, exceptionally talented among the artists. He talked about Miller, his teacher at the Art Students League. After Miller, he didn't go back to school. He painted for himself.

He had a studio on Canal Street near Essex Street. He saw Seward Park, and he saw the people on the street; he used to paint it from his window. At the same time, he went to the waterside and made sketches; then he would come back and paint a canvas from the sketches. Then he rented a room near the water, near the river, where he made many more sketches and a large painting of the East River. He painted views of Delancey Street facing the Williamsburgh Bridge and the front and the back of the Williamsburgh Bridge.

He brought his paintings to Guy Pene du Bois, who encouraged him. He showed the paintings at his first exhibition in 1929 or 1930 at the prestigious Daniel Gallery. Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, and John Marin were among the very good artists there.

One of Raphael's favorite paintings from this exhibition (which I still have)

was "The Dance" (1926). His own family: Moses dancing with his sister Rebbi, with his mother and father, his grandmother and grandfather, and great grandmother all in the background.

He always sketched and painted from life. He always had two or three models in his studio. They would walk around or sit or lie on his couch. He used to make drawings and paintings. Some of his models liked being in the studio; they used to come and visit even when he didn't paint them, just hung around.

Raphael had a lot of friends and a lot of admirers. He had a lot of young artists come in and ask advice; he was always encouraging.

He moved his studio from downtown to uptown. I used to visit him regularly, without calling first. I would sit and talk with him. We used to talk about all sorts of things, often about the art of today.

He painted several portraits of me, one of the most interesting in 1929. I made a portrait of Raphael, and of Moses Soyer; and of Moses's son David when he was eight years old, and of his grandchildren; and of Raphael's daughter Mary and his grandchildren when they were younger.

**R**aphael and I exchanged many works, and we each made many exchanges with other artists. Everybody has collections. He had a very beautiful collection from different painters and many of his own self-portraits. He had many drawings by Pascin, one of his favorite artists; he admired and was influenced by him in the early days.

Raphael used to love 19th-century painters. He would always talk about Degas, Delacroix, Gericault, and especially Thomas Eakins.

Starting in the early 40s, he painted several large group portraits of artists. In one exhibition at the Associated American Artists Gallery in the 1940s, he showed 20 or 25 portraits of contemporary artists. He knew everybody, but he was very close friends with Alexander Brook, Kuniyoshi, Reginald Marsh (they shared a studio together on Union Square), Philip Evergood, Nicolai Cikovsky, Marsden Hartley,

## TRIBUTE

Joseph Stella, Joseph Floch, Max Weber, William Gropper, Jack Levine, also with Arschile Gorky and Mark Rothko.

He knew a lot of writers and did portraits of some of them. In late years, he did a portrait of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

Raphael Soyer was the last of his generation who was a great modern American painter, the period that bridged European traditional painting with American painting. He was on his own; he always stuck with what he was interested in. He survived the generation breaking with traditional past, and he survived to enjoy the renewed recognition as a forerunner of the youngest generation of realist painters.

For the last five or eight years, he went to Europe every summer with his wife, Rebecca. They went to see museums in Europe and found inspiration from his favorite masters, Delacroix, El Greco, Rembrandt, Degas. He would revisit his favorite paintings in Holland, France, Italy, and England.

He always had his sketchbook. We all had sketchbooks. For everything we saw, we would do a sketch of it. He did the same thing. Everywhere he went, to the museum or in the streets. While he traveled, he met many artists and sketched them. Eventually, the sketchbook with his autobiography was published.

In the last 10 or 15 years, there was a great change in his paintings. The colors became stronger and better, clearer, very beautiful blues and grays and yellows. His paintings were always mellow and beautiful.

He often would say to me,

"Why did Moses have to die before me?"

After Moses died, we became a lot closer.

In the last few summers, Raphael came to Provincetown, but in the last year, 1987, he was not quite himself. In past years, he would paint all the time. He didn't feel like painting. He felt like sitting, reading, drawing a little bit. We saw each other almost every day. I would go and pick Rebecca up to go to the market. Raphael helped Rebecca get out of the car, he held her hand, and they would go to the store. He never complained about

anything. When he left Provincetown, he was in perfect health. A few days later, he took sick. He went to the hospital. When I visited him a few days later, he was an entirely different person. I went to visit him at the hospital almost every day. When he came back home, I visited him at his house.

He would take me for a walk and show me his collection. He would show me a drawing and say, "Remember this drawing by Friedlander?" or "Remember when you made this drawing?" He had the drawing on his wall for so many years.

I had my sketchbook. He said, "No, no, no." He would fall asleep. When he woke up, I would have a drawing.

Anybody who came to his bed, he would take them by the hand, press their hand, and tell them good-bye. He knew what was going on. Someone called from California. "Tell her the truth," he said—just like his paintings, always truthful.

When you lose a friend, you lose half of your body, half of your mind; and the other half, you don't know what happens. Raphael Soyer was really my best friend. When you have a very close friend, he knows your secrets, and you know his secrets. This is how friends get along. He was on his own, different from all the others, always himself, always unique. It was really wonderful to have been with him.

*Commemorative tribute to Raphael Soyer, written by Chaim Gross and read at the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Institute dinner meeting November 3, 1988, by Allen Ginsberg.*



SELF PORTRAIT, 1942



*Self Portrait, 1927- the Phillips Collection*

# Raphael Soyer

## *Meetings in Provincetown*

By Michael Mazur

One August afternoon in 1987, my wife, Gail, and I were returning from a fast-walk to the West End. Hot and thirsty, we were both attracted and put off by the noisy tourist crowd at the Cafe Blase and its promise of a cooling drink. We stood undecided on the sidewalk, when Gail spotted Raphael Soyer and his wife, Rebecca, near the front. They suddenly transformed the scene into a canvas of Soyer and his people—Raphael's sad, all-enduring face held the center, his characteristic oversized cap nearly resting on his large eyeglasses. Rebecca's wide-brimmed summer hat obscured all but a few wisps of hair and a freckled nose; the brim touched her shoulders. Two very small people at a table that seemed to float in a space of its own—the Provincetown of our imagination.

I wasn't sure he'd remember me (we'd met in the early 70s at Sylvan Cole's Associated American Artists Gallery), but Gail encouraged me to say hello. I felt huge, bending over the table and extending my hand in greeting. At the AAA, we had chatted about our work in printmaking. "How many editions have you done?" he'd asked, and before I could begin my tally, he told me the exact number of prints he'd made in his career. I'd found our conversation amusing and comfortable, like two golf bums, happily competitive, comparing scores in the club house. I reminded him of his interest in our respective outputs. He remembered and nodded soberly, and then the Soyers became as animated as they'd been quiet. They asked a flurry of questions: "Do you come here often? Where do you stay? Do you have children?" Soyer listened to my responses, intent on learning as much about us as he could. He turned to Rebecca, generously praising what he knew of my work. I told

him Gail had seen him on the boardwalk in Venice, California, the previous October (a figure who'd elevated the raffish scene, the funky *passagiatta* of another seaside town). "We go every year," he said. "We have relatives there." When we said goodbye, I said we'd look for them in California next winter. Soyer shrugged, his eyebrows arching. "Maybe," he said. "It depends." At 87, he was making no promises.

We watched them make their slow departure. Lively as they'd been in conversation, they were frail on their feet, but they moved so deliberately that within a few minutes, they'd passed the linden tree at the library and disappeared beyond the turn of Commercial Street several blocks beyond.

As often happens after a chance meeting, we saw the Soyers the next evening at The Flagship, where they joined us for dessert and coffee. Again, they were full of questions, about Gail, our children,

# Raphael Soyer

vacations. This time, they answered some of ours. "We have only one daughter," Rebecca said, "but she has four children, so we really have five children." Raphael came from a large family. He had two sisters and three brothers, two of whom, Moses and Isaac, were painters. Their father, a tailor and a respected Hebrew scholar, brought them from the Russian town of Borisoglebsk to Philadelphia when Raphael was twelve. From there, they'd moved to New York, where his father became a teacher at Yeshiva University, its first teacher of Jewish literature—"To this day, there is an award in his name." They had a sophisticated childhood, Raphael said. In Russia they'd lived as assimilated Jews. He was educated at the *gymnasium* and had read all the great Russian writers before he came to America. Even his Jewish teacher (Rebecca called him a "beadle") kept order by saying, "In the love of Jesus, be quiet!"

Raphael went to art schools in New York and had lived there ever since. He didn't drive, which was why he liked to come to Provincetown. "When I first came in 1927, Commercial Street was wooden planks. There were no cars, no tourists. On the water, there used to be lots of docks and ships and not many buildings on the bay side of the street. It was so quite—and none of that brass!" referring to the cars nosing along Commercial Street. He'd first brought Rebecca here in 1954.

Speaking of New York's Union Square, the place that figured so importantly in his work: "They've really fixed it up again." Then his tone turned nostalgic again about Provincetown. He talked about Hopper and Shahn, about his friend, Chaim Gross, whom he still saw, "He came up to do sets for O'Neill's theater." He remembered long-ago parties, especially one in Wellfleet, when Edwin Dickinson came all dressed up in a suit and bow tie, but barefoot. He laughed at the memory, relishing Dickinson's eccentric en-

trance.

Soyer spoke as if he were the last leaf on the tree. He'd lived so long, seen so much. His brothers, Moses and Isaac gone, so many painter and writer friends gone. Arshile Gorky, whom he'd watched paint his famous self-portrait with his mother: "He used little snapshots for it." Marsh, Kuniyoshi, Gropper, Hopper, Lloyd Goodrich, who wrote about nearly all of them, gone. He returned to Gorky, and I

*Soyer spoke  
as if he were the  
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the tree.*

said how much I loved his work. "Only his early work," he corrected me, "when he was a figurative painter. I don't understand his abstract work. How should I know whether it's any good?" I changed the subject, not wanting to be led into any disagreement with him. It was one to which he would inevitably return.

I mentioned a drawing of his I'd just seen at the Fine Arts Work Center's auction, an early drawing of details from an Italian Renaissance painting, and asked him about it. "Oh, I've drawn so much at museums. I must have done it while I was at the Academy in Rome. I loved my time in Italy and Spain. El Greco's *The Burial of Count Orgaz*! Who can paint like that today? But my favorite is Degas; I own two of his drawings." He talked about his collection of drawings that he'd bought or

traded for: a Pascin, a Gorky, Fantin Latour, many others. And again, Degas. "He's still underrated. Cezanne was the master for radical artists, and the people love Renoir, but I keep coming back to Degas, Degas and Eakins. Degas was the last great European master—not Picasso, not Matisse." I felt him taking me back to the minefield of contemporary art, but happily, the conversation seemed to take another turn. How did we like Boston?

But hardly had we begun an answer when he mentioned Jack Levine; had we ever met him? I said I'd been introduced once, but we'd arrived in Boston long after he'd left for New York. He praised him, then listed artists whose success he couldn't understand. His anger was apparent, not bitterness, really, but a firm distaste for modernism in general and abstraction in particular. I mentioned some artists I thought we could agree about; he countered that they weren't getting much attention. I must have shrugged, because he asked me then if I felt I was getting enough attention.

We'd certainly come back to the situation of contemporary art (he called it "temporary"), but by a more personal route than I'd have imagined or been alert to forestall. I couldn't avoid the intense discussion of success and career he'd aimed for. I answered lamely that I welcomed attention but didn't crave it, especially if it meant a loss of freedom to do what I want, to work the way I have to do. "But why don't you want more attention, if you feel you deserve it?" he asked with dismay. My next shrug was answer, and no answer at all. "There are so many museums, corporations, so much space, why do they buy all that lousy stuff?" I said we have so little control over "taste" that it's better not to try to figure it out, it's better just to paint and let the work be its own reward. As a survivor, he accepted my optimism—or diplomacy—with a grudging humor. He said our conversa-

# Raphael Soyer

tion reminded him of one he'd had at the Academy of Arts and Letters. He was standing in the Academy library with the writer and *New Yorker* editor, William Maxwell; Soyer pointed to the bookshelves and said they made him feel melancholy, "All those books that no one reads." "Oh," he said Maxwell replied, "but the joy of writing them!"

Often in our conversation, Soyer would refer to people whose portraits he'd painted. This summer, in Provincetown, he said, he only made portrait drawings. I mentioned Alice Neel, whom he said he loved. I remarked that the attention she received came late in her life. It was his turn to shrug.

The subject drifted for a while to poetry. "I read the Russian poets in Russian; they are very hard to translate. My brother, Moses, was a great translator from the Russian. He once translated a Mayakovsky poem, and when he saw a Nabokov translation of the same poem, he was delighted to see that theirs were identical with the exception of one word!" He was proud of his education and what it had allowed him to read, but he wanted to return to talk of painting and to his feelings about abstraction, obviously an unhealed wound.

"In the early 50s, a bunch of us got together to try to understand abstraction. We invited all our friends. I sent out the invitations." He mentioned artists among his contemporaries—Kuniyoshi, Shahn, Biddle, Isobel Bishop, Ratner, Levine, Henry Varnum Poor; his brothers, Moses and Isaac—whose careers were about to be cut off by the meteoric rise of Abstract Expressionism. "We decided to start a magazine and we called it *Reality*; we only published one issue. When people read it and heard what we were doing, we got a lot of letters from all over. One came by messenger from the Museum of Modern Art, from Alfred Barr. He told us that we'd be in trouble, that we'd fall from the good

graces of the Museum if we continued our project. He said that we would get a reputation as troublemakers, and then suggested that we were influenced by the Communists among us! This was too much for some of the artists in the group, who left immediately. After that, it just fell apart."

We were fascinated by the story. If he'd remembered Barr's letter correctly—no one has, as yet, confirmed it—it would

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reinforce the argument that the New York School painters had, ironically and unintentionally, struck the appropriate political tone—no "social" or "political" content—for the heyday of McCarthyism's effect on the curators and critics. But Soyer had a broader point to make: "Rebecca's heard me say this so often, but I don't think ours is an age for painting; at least that's my theory. Ours is an age of technology; there's no great painting." But Soyer had continued to paint what he called his "disheveled girls," continued to paint the way he wanted, yet not without the sense of loss that speaks from his canvas as it did from his poignant features.

It was getting late, and I think that we were more tired than Rebecca and Raphael. We made our way out of The Flagship. "Oh, they're still here," the

young hostess said to me as we passed, "Those cute people!" reducing them to children. Her words jarred with our experience of their intelligence and strength, and with the philosophical bent we need to see in an artist who has lived and worked into his ninth decade, who is still so fully himself.

Walking back with them to their Commercial Street motel, we felt their fragility again. The cars passed so close to us that we automatically moved to the outside of the Soyers, as if we could protect them. I was mulling over our conversation about the art world, and tried one more volley. I reminded him of what Edvard Munch is reported to have said when someone argued that photography had replaced painting. So long as a camera could not be brought into heaven or hell, he'd replied, painting would survive. Soyer didn't blink. "You can't paint there either!" he said.

Postscript: We never saw the Soyers again, for he died three months later. *The New York Times'* obituary quoted William Lieberman, Curator of Twentieth Century Painting at the Metropolitan

Museum, and for many years a curator at MOMA: "He became the grand old man of 20th century realist art. He did marvelous portraits that had no social message. He was a real painter." (Italics mine.) □□

*Michael Mazur is a painter and printmaker residing in Cambridge. His work has been widely exhibited in New York and elsewhere. He is primarily represented by the Fawbush Gallery in New York and the Barbara Krakow Gallery in Boston.*

# The Death and Life of a Famous Painter

By Peter Hutchinson

Funerals were such joyous times. Louisa Emit hummed to herself as she put on her maroon hat. It went well with her old gold dress that was dotted with violet morning glories. Although 80 years old, she viewed the world as though seeing it for the first time. Happily she hurried towards the graveyard, anxious not to miss the ceremony.

Later, she kept vigil by the disinterred coffin. Confetti from the celebration still clung to her hair. What a fine funeral party it had been—festive relatives, good food, and such rock-and-roll music. She had danced and danced, knowing that Jonas Emit, her husband-to-be, would soon be home. There were years of contentment before them. No wonder Louisa felt in good spirits.

She watched Jonas' corpse carefully. He lay in the coffin dressed in black. His shirt was starched and immaculate. He wore a red velvet bow tie. His face was peaceful, but somewhat drawn looking. As she waited, full of anticipation, a look of pain appeared on his face. It was replaced by a look of joy as he revived and greeted her. She reassured him as he was helped from the coffin. "All your paint-

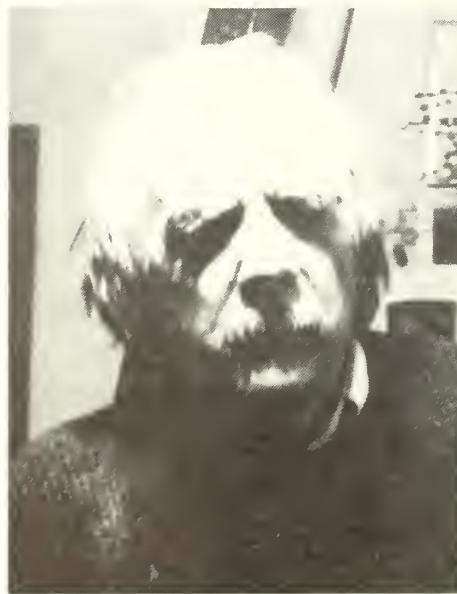
ings have arrived from museums all over the world, dear," she told him. "Your studio is waiting. Everything is ready." She kissed him. "So good to have you home." Then she asked, "How does your heart feel?"

"Oh, a little weak and fluttery," Jonas replied. "But it's getting better every minute." And so it was.

Those first happy months were spent quietly enough. Their children, Alan and Mary, aged 60 and 62, visited them often.

Jonas took things very easily in the studio at first. He sat for hours thinking over his life to come, lovingly remembering his paintings. Sometimes he fondled his paint tubes, his fine sable brushes. He felt peaceful and content. Louisa had kept the studio sparkling clean. The fine mahogany floor shone. She had carefully covered with vinyl the space in front of his enormous oak easel. He contemplated the easel with the secure knowledge of all the paintings he would soon be working on. For the moment, he would rest and recover his strength. There was plenty of time to work later. Plenty of time.

His doctor had insisted that he convalesce for one whole year. He passed many hours walking in the quiet New England countryside. These green Connecticut hills satisfied his deep love of



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nature. How he enjoyed watching the hot summer weather turn into lush, cool spring; the vivid summer flowers, scarlet roses, and fiery zinnias give way to gentler spring colors, cool banks of tulips, and pale daffodils. Then winter came as leaves disappeared into buds. Jonas, more lyrical than original, said at the first snowfall, "When winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Long, slow days of icy stillness, punctuated by violent snowstorms and, less often, thaws of gentle rains, went by. Finally, autumn, windy and beautiful, massed the reds and yellows of oaks and elms almost too sensuous to his painter's eye.

Now the year was over and Jonas could get to work. He did feel better, though still bothered by the complaints of old age: a touch of sciatica, bad digestion, rheumatism—small things he could endure which would clear up in a few years.

The day arrived when he could start serious work. He felt hesitant at first. The paintings looked so professional and finished. He knew, though, that they were too detailed, too professional. There was missing that certain fire he remembered, the fire of his youth. These late paintings were calculated. Brilliant in their brushwork, magnificent in their glazes, intellectual in their understanding of the semi-abstract forms he used, but, as every good

artist knows, the work of genius is more than the sum of these parts.

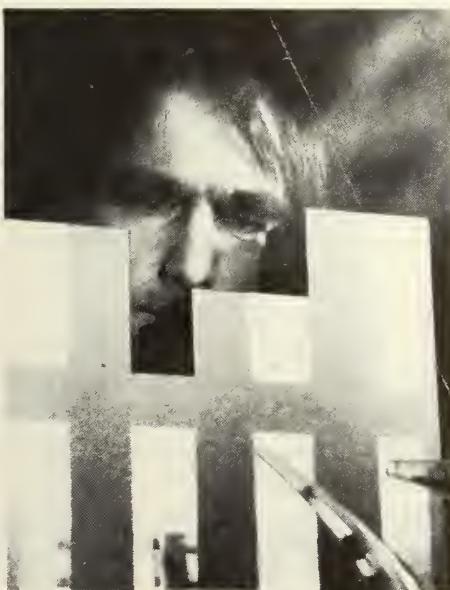
After this first hesitation, he approached the canvas. He removed the brush strokes one by one from his most recent painting. He swept off the large areas of glaze, first the alizarin glaze, then the cobalt blue glaze with a hint of white, then the tracery of black paint set in varnish. The figures and forms emerged and then disappeared until he arrived at the thin oil and varnish wash laid on the white ground. He swept this away with bold, sure strokes, using a housepainter's brush. Finally, he carefully removed the three coats of white gesso, sanding in between each coat. Then the rabbits' skin glue came off and was put back in the can. At last he unstretched the canvas, carefully taking out the tacks. He rolled it, unkeyed the stretchers, and put them away. At the end of the month, he returned these and other art supplies to the art store in return for a small sum.

He knew that reviews of his shows would soon appear. Though museums no longer had his paintings, he was enjoying the large retrospective gallery shows of his later career. He also had those halcyon days of being an up-and-coming painter to look forward to. Those were the best days, he remembered.

Jonas had a large bank account. So large was it, in fact, that he hardly noticed the sums of money he paid collectors when they returned his paintings, although the amounts were often thousands of dollars. He was kept busy working on the paintings, taking the paint off, putting it back in the tubes and returning it to the art store. Years went by.

Expenses, however, loomed in the future. And he was aware of them. He was startled one day when Louisa said: "We must prepare soon for your mother's funeral." He realized that his aged mother would soon come to live with them for a time. He was surprised that 20 years had passed. He looked in the mirror and noticed with regret the first signs of color at the ends of his snowy hair. No one likes to be reminded of the passing years. Later, he and Louisa would tease each other as his hair turned raven black and hers became a reddish chestnut.

He was working at the time on his most famous series of paintings. They consisted of portraits of Louisa over a period of ten years. In each one of them, he saw her become more beautiful. Her cheeks filled out, her eyes began to sparkle, her skin became softer. Her figure became larger at the bosom and neater at the waist. Her legs became long and slender and the



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slight tracery of visible veins disappeared. Her skin lost every blemish. These portraits contained the signs of his mature painting in all its glory. It was this period that established him as the best known American painter. These works contained the famous yellow slash, the unified dark areas, the well-defined nose, the forehead that blended with the background of freely stroked brushwork. These were the landmarks of his fame.

The days of his dreadful quarrels with Louisa came and now were nearly over. He had dreaded each approaching argument. But it was "all water under the bridge," he reflected one day, leaning over the local river as the water flowed upstream. As soon as the arguments were over, of course, he would completely forget them. In fact, everything as it happened completely passed from his mind. So quickly did this come about that he was not aware of it. It never occurred to him to write anything down. The past did not exist for him, only his future.

The children came home to live. First Alan arrived, aged 20, just before being graduated as an accountant. He was a lean, sensitive young man with Louisa's violet eyes and Jonas' thick hair. Mary left her husband and came home a few years later at the age of 18. She was a delightful girl, perfect in every detail except for the lack of a little finger on her left hand. The newly united family was very happy. Luckily for their financial situation, the children, as they entered adolescence, grew into their clothes. Indeed, the family was entering a period of hardship, although sending the children to college brought in some money. Though fewer and fewer paintings were returned to his studio, commensurately Jonas' bank account had shrunk almost to nothing. He found it increasingly difficult to pay the collectors, even though his prices were now between \$200 and \$500, rather than the thousands he used to pay for his paintings.

Louisa was such a help. A wonderful wife and mother, she often joked to keep her spirits up as she did household chores. "A stitch in time saves nine," she would say, as she unmended the children's

socks, or "Haste makes waste," as she quickly took trash out of the wastebaskets and distributed it around the house.

A great day lay ahead for Jonas. The day of his first one-man show. How he anticipated it. All his paintings had been unpainted except this first fine group. They stood in his studio, full of promise and talent and great auguries of his coming fame. This was to be the greatest day of his life. The paintings were done in the joy of his first huge love for Louisa, in boundless energy and faultless intellect. If they were a little ambitious, a trifle naive, these were small faults that anyone could see would soon be solved by such an obvious talent. To Jonas, the works were perfect.

The day of his first one-man show came and went. All the celebration was ended. Now he was an unknown painter, but full of hope. It was about this time that Mary, now aged 5, had an accident while playing with the kitchen knife. She was very happy to get her little finger back. It had been an embarrassment all her life to be so disfigured.

Jonas now worked at the newspaper offices. The family had returned to the city and they lived in a slum tenement building on the Lower East Side. Louisa was in the hospital. Soon she would be pregnant, with the additional burden of a two-year-old child. This was the time of Jonas' first patrons, those people who believed in his work. He found it very difficult to pay them their money. His job unsettling type at the newspaper was an additional expense that he hardly knew how to meet.

Sad times lay ahead. Both Louisa and Jonas dreaded her return from her final pregnancy. Only nine months in the future was their wedding. As the day approached, their love grew more passionate. They went everywhere together, poignantly happy. Jonas' paintings dwindled quickly. At last, the sad day of their wedding arrived. Everybody wore black, of course. Soon now, one day on 34th Street, they would part, walk in opposite directions and immediately forget one another forever.

Just after he forgot Louisa, came

that wonderful experience when the heavens opened, when the earth stood still, when the shades were peeled back from his eyes. That day the earth sang, bells rang, little children wore halos, and even cockroaches seemed beautiful. In other words, on that day for no observable reason, he knew he was an artist and all the world seemed different to him. On that wonderful, dreadful, beautiful, and frightening day, he was lost to the world of business, became hopeless to his family, became miserable, happy, sorry, and glad all at the same time. And it occurred quite suddenly and unexpectedly when he was eating a hot dog and happened to look at a piece of yellow toffee paper floating in a puddle. There was no explaining such an experience, but it was certainly real to Jonas.

Now Jonas unpainted his first bad work, done before he knew what his life was going to be. He erased the hesitant drawings and ultrarealistic but badly drawn sketches. Nervously, he anticipated going to live with his parents. His father had but recently returned, having been killed in the war, and was anxious to see Jonas again.

Back home he went, and back to school, down the grades.

With increasing speed, the days of his childhood rolled by. The cradle loomed in his future. Struggling and protesting, he was swaddled and imprisoned in it, not understanding.

He examined his fingers, spoke his first and last words. He slept more and more as his consciousness dimmed and the days of his life sped by.

He was driven to the hospital in his mother's arms. Everyone was sad. People always cry at births. □□

*Peter Hutchinson, best known as a conceptual artist who did pioneer work with Robert Smithson and Dennis Oppenheim, is also a writer, and has used words or literature persistently in his visual work. In addition, he writes occasional art criticism and fiction. He is a recent recipient of a Pollock-Krasner grant.*



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*LILACS, 1955*

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# *Lost and Found:* The Legacy of Karl Knaths

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**By Charles Giuliano**

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It was Karl Knaths who brought me to Provincetown during the summer of 1966. Paul Johnson Haldeman, then design director for the United Church of Christ, was assembling a portfolio of original lithographs on religious subjects that would be printed in a large edition and distributed to the member churches. When we discussed what artists would be appropriate, I proposed Karl Knaths because I had always loved *Lilacs* (1955) in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. At that time, Knaths was one of the most widely respected American artists of his generation. As an indication of his reputation then among museum curators, *Sun Up* was included in the eclectic 1967 Annual Exhibition of the Whitney Museum of American Art. The Whitney Annuals are generally viewed as repre-

senting the taste of the period.

Having recently purchased an Alfa Romeo, an extremely eccentric vehicle that, like many Italians, refused to work when it rained, I enjoyed driving around that summer and commissioning artists for the portfolio. Phillip Evergood, William Gropper, and Sister Corita were some of the artists signed for the project. I prided myself on my salesmanship and even talked Jules Olitski into making a print that got vetoed as too abstract for the portfolio. So I was sales-ready when I knocked on the door of Knath's west end house in Provincetown. He showed me into a sparsely furnished white room with the names of artists and philosophical heroes chalked onto the bricks of a small chimney: Blake, Swedenborg, Bach and Gris, Giotto and Cezanne, Poussin and Plato.

Above the mantel was a small painting by Jean Arp. Knaths was cheerful and more than cooperative for the portfolio project. Later, stones were shipped to him,

and he told me that it was his first lithograph, although he had done prints in the past (monotypes and woodblock prints). He was apparently inspired to produce other lithographs during the last five years of his life. As we talked, all too briefly, I can recall his wife, Helen, making an appearance at the door, where she hovered as if to observe what was going on. She seemed very old and frail to me and also somewhat strange as she didn't speak. Her sense of withdrawal contrasted with his charm. Perhaps that's why I wasn't offered tea although I had come a considerable distance just to talk to him. Later I was to learn that while Knaths had open studio hours each Sunday during the summer months, visitors were entertained on the porch and invitations to dinner were unheard of. Nevertheless, he often visited friends in the evening while she stayed at home.

And it was Knaths who brought me back to Provincetown several years ago to

## KARL KNATHS

research the life and work of an artist for whom I had long felt respect and admiration. There was also a certain sense of urgency, given the age of many of the artists and individuals whom I interviewed. My first interview, for example, was in August 1982 with Nat Halper, sitting on a bench in the middle of the Art Association. He passed away the following June. It was moving to me that Fritz Bultman, who was terminally ill at the time, granted me a brief but insightful interview. And I will fondly remember the amusing insights of the late Myron Stout, who shared an afternoon with me several summers ago.

The more deeply that I probed in my research on Knaths, however, the more dismayed and disappointed I became. The current status of his artistic legacy since his death at 70 in 1971 is basically a worst-case scenario of what can happen to the estate of an artist and his posthumous reputation. There was a series of related events, from blistering reviews that dismissed him as an American modernist, to the wholesale disposal of works of Knaths and Agnes Weinrich from the estates of Karl and Helen Knaths, to the chaotic handling of documents and the loss of important materials. During World War II, Knaths became associated with the prestigious Paul Rosenberg & Co., which Karl liked to tell his friends was "Picasso's gallery." During the artist's lifetime, Paul Rosenberg skillfully managed his career and placed major works in virtually all the important American museums, in addition to a great concentration of paintings, from all aspects of his career, in the Phillips Collection. Knaths enjoyed many honors and prizes. Had the Rosenberg Gallery continued to manage the artist's estate, the Knaths story would be quite different today.

The Rosenberg Gallery did represent the estate for several years after his death in 1971. But there were relatively few sales compared to the 15-20 sales each

year that Knaths was accustomed to during his last years. The gallery had always obtained very good prices for the work, although the cost of a work by Knaths was but a fraction of what the gallery received for its works by European modernists. Also, the gallery was now in the hands of Alexander Rosenberg who had less of a personal interest in the artist. The gallery mounted several retrospective exhibitions that were reviewed by art publications, but this generated little interest or sales. Those familiar with the Knaths estate have commented that it appeared that the artist's best works had been sold and placed in

*Had the Rosenberg Gallery continued to manage the artist's estate, the Knaths story would be quite different today.*

museums during his lifetime. And the works of the artist's last years, which were looser and more brightly colored, commanded less interest among collectors than his earlier works. The majority of the unsold works dated from the 1960s.

Tepid market interest in Knaths during the 1970s was not helped by devastating reviews for the 1973-1974 exhibition, "Karl Knaths: Five Decades of Painting," curated by Charles Edward Eaton and Isabel Patterson Eaton and circulated by International Exhibitions Foundation. In a *Washington Post* review of the retrospective,

Paul Richard wrote, "Karl Knaths (1891-1971) was not a master—at anything save choosing colors—and his pictures have begun to date." After citing a list of honors during his lifetime, Richard concluded, "His reputation has not prospered since. Knaths will be remembered as a masterful colorist but a minor artist."

Writing for *Art International* in 1972, Carter Ratcliff was somewhat more sympathetic. "He never abandoned Cubism, but he did avoid its 'internationalist' excesses. Of the American Cubists, he is one of the few who is both genuinely American and genuinely a Cubist." But if

Ratcliff was temperate in his review of Knaths, Donald B. Kuspit was venomous in a 1974 review in *Art in America*. From the very first sentence, "The autopsy of Knaths' career has yet to be performed . . .," one has a foreboding for what is to follow. Kuspit continued, "Knaths is an example of a contemporary provincial artist—a role epitomized by his refusal to visit Europe. Persisting in his provinciality, he made a virtue of it, but his art failed because of it . . . Knaths' art suffers from a poverty of purpose, a dearth of problems and it is ultimately meaningless humanly—for the natives it is meant to enlighten as well as artistically."

Kuspit also had nothing good to say about the Charles Eaton catalogue, which he dismissed as "an excellent example of *retardataire* criticism—sentimental, roundabout, pretentious—but one appropriate to Knath's mild-mannered *retardataire* modernism." Kuspit finishes his dissection of Knaths by stating, "At best Knaths is quaint, at worst boring. His art is an object lesson in the limited integrity and shallowness of style that comes of compromising with both reality and art."

In a letter to the editor printed in a 1974 issue of *Art in America*, Eaton responded to Kuspit's review as an example of "the Necrophiliac School of art criticism" and further listed the many honors

## KARL KNATHS

that Knaths received and the distinguished collections that owned the work. In the same issue, Kuspit replied to the Eaton letter: "that an artist is collected does not mean that he is understood, and honorific talk about his person is not an analytic approach to his art. I am not opposed to sentiment per se, but I am opposed to it when it is used to apotheosize an artist so as to obscure understanding of him. I would like to point out that the fact that Eaton owns four out of the 50 works which were in the Knaths exhibition, and many more that were not, puts him in an ambiguous critical position."

Since the 1940s, Knaths had been under contract to the Rosenberg Gallery, which took a one-third commission on works they sold. But Paul Rosenberg set high standards and returned a number of works, which the artist was allowed to sell from his studio. Over the years, Knaths had many summer customers, including Eaton as well as Emil Arnold, who bought in large quantities. Also, Knaths allowed the Tirca Karlis Gallery to handle his works on paper. By definition, works sold from the studio were not his best efforts. Particularly in the late work, Knaths was uneven, and one surmises that the Eaton-organized retrospective was not scrupulously assembled.

Fortunately, Knaths did not survive to see the unraveling of a lifetime of dedication and hard work. By the late 1960s, in light of increasing age and declining health, both Nat Halper and Sal del Deo recalled that he had asked them about how Sally Avery had handled her husband's estate. But the situation for Knaths was quite different since Helen had never taken an active role in his career and was considerably older than he was. They also had no children, and he was primarily concerned with providing for her. Helen, in fact, reached 100 and was financially comfortable in her last years.

In 1969, Kenneth Desmaris, an offi-

cer of the First National Bank of Cape Cod, now Shawmut Bank, which handled the Knaths account, noticed that the artist had an excessively large amount in his checking account that was not earning interest. Knaths believed that he had to make at least a dozen sales a year in order to survive. But Desmaris convinced him that a restructuring of his assets would free him from dependency on sales.

"Karl didn't feel that he was a wealthy man," Desmaris recalled during a 1983 interview. "I proved to him that he was. At that time, he might have had a half-million dollars in assets, but he didn't

Ferol Warthen was among his students). Desmaris explained that it was the artist's last wish to give back to these institutions for their important contributions to his career. From 1971 through 1978, Desmaris had regular dealings with Alexander Rosenberg who continued to organize exhibitions.

"In that period (1971-1978), Rosenberg sold from 25 to 30 paintings at decent prices," Desmaris said. "The highest he got was, I think, \$7500." The bank also directly sold works that were in the artist's possession or on consignment on the Cape at the time of his death. "I think the

highest I got on an individual sale was \$6000. I think we first sold to Ed Shein (a private dealer) 35 paintings for \$3500 a piece," Desmaris recalled.

After Helen's death in 1978, the priorities for the trust changed. "The position had to change from her being the primary beneficiary, to others, and paintings being a substantive portion of the principal of the trust, we had to change from non-income producing to income producing. So we made the decision then to sell all paintings. We tried to get Alexander Rosenberg to buy them. We tried to get a variety of people to buy them," Desmaris said. At the time of his death, there were some 200 paintings in the Knaths estate. After approaching a number of prominent galleries with offers to sell at wholesale lots, as well as

entertaining ideas of promoting exhibitions and publications to improve the value of the paintings, the bank decided to "get out of the art business." After calling in the Knaths inventory from the Rosenberg Gallery, Desmaris presided over what may be described as a liquidation process. As in a Grimms' Fairy Tale, the bank turned canvas into gold.

"I bought 125 paintings from the bank through Desmaris over a period of three years," said art dealer Edward Shein during a 1983 interview, "and I had to  
(continued on page 161)

*Dumping 125  
mostly minor  
paintings on the  
market certainly  
tends to depress  
the sales for better  
paintings by the  
same artist.*

know it. We're managing right now close to a million dollars for his accounts." Desmaris also worked with Knaths to create a trust for his wife that after 1978 benefited her heirs. When the last of her now-elderly beneficiaries are deceased, the assets of the estates of Karl and Helen Knaths will be divided equally by the Art Institute of Chicago and the Phillips Collection. Knaths had studied at the Art Institute and Duncan Phillips had been his first and most devoted collector and champion (Knaths for many years taught a winter term at the art school of the Phillips, where

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# *The Passion of Edmond DiStasi, a Remembrance*

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**By Suzanne Sherbell**

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I first met Edmond when I came to Provincetown in the fall of 1971. Though his reputation preceded him, meeting him was no disappointment. As director and guiding light of the Provincetown Theater Company that winter and spring, he played the role of general shepherd to the flock that gathered around him for the rather momentous and full scale production of *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*. What he created that year was more than a mere play. As Charles Horne recalled in his article on that production, published two years ago in *Provincetown Arts*, "Here was participatory theater in its finest hour." That he had a glimpse of his own magic, before he died last summer of AIDS, is some solace to those who loved him so much.

Who was this audacious and rare bird—bearded and balding at the crown—always conspicuously gracious? His straight, well carved nose and graceful hands, always gesturing articulately, gave him the manner of an Italian count. He spent a string of winters in Italy, and spoke Italian fluently, breaking into that language spontaneously from time to time. Still his manner retained a distinctly Jewish flavor. Raised in Connecticut, he carried himself as a cultured, bohemian, New Yorker. He had the



EDMOND DISTASI, 1935 - 1988

air of an aristocrat and the heart of a populist. Passionate about food, theater, music, politics, and style, he never strained for attention, but earned it again and again.

He held court as a bartender at Rosy in the summers of the early 70s. In the midst of an atmosphere intense with relatedness and community, he decorated his drinks with violets, offering them equally to tattooed ladies, celebrities, and carpenters. He was an equal opportunity employer, so to speak. At one o'clock, when the bar closed, he would say, "Really, darling, one o'clock," then invite a coterie to his cozy salon upstairs and across the street. There, he'd whip up some simple and fabulous treat, containing asparagus or truffles. With this glorious sustenance, we would continue our group study of the universe. In the background, he played opera, which he called "Italian music." He loved to laugh amid the music. I have always said that he understood and exercised the cosmic giggle.

His learning experiences were always joyous occasions for his friends, wherever they occurred: in Berkeley coffeehouses, at a "fabulous" Vietnamese restaurant in Greenwich Village, over a cup a of kale soup at Cookie's Tap in Provincetown. Edmond was alive to each moment, giving his all, risking everything. His willingness to risk all contributed to the vicissitudes of his life, but he maintained his grace, wit, style, charm and abundance, regardless of outer circumstances.

In 1974, he and Howard Gruber started Front Street, down in a cellar, where one descended the catacomb that had been trans-

formed into a restaurant. The brick walls muffled sound, giving conversation a hushed intensity. Ray Keaton was at the bar, playing the songs of his old friend, Bobbie Short. Michael Cassilano wore his white waiter's linen folded smartly on his hip. K.T. Wood told customers what was in "Creamy Hebrew," the house salad dressing. Weekly, the restaurant's menu changed. They served what was fresh and available in season. Edmond convinced us to eat sweetbreads and kidneys and other dishes we knew less well. While Howard worked the kitchen, backstage, so to speak, Edmond brought theater and illusion to the dining room.

We always loved the floor show, but his warmth and an endearing child-like twinkle were the main attractions. In my mind, I hold a remembrance so strong of Edmond in the midst of a passionate discussion, with someone of apparent consequence, turning to me momentarily with a surrendered smile and the tiniest shrug of his shoulders—as if to say, "I don't have a clue what any of this means."—then diving back into the discussion.

Edmond spent his last days in Connecticut, where he did the best he could to orchestrate his final exit. With his sisters at bedside, listening to his precious Italian music—Scarlatti, I'm told—Edmond DiStasi passed from this world. A gracious ending, after all; worthy of such a man. He will be missed. □□

*Suzanne Sherbell is an attorney, currently residing in New York.*

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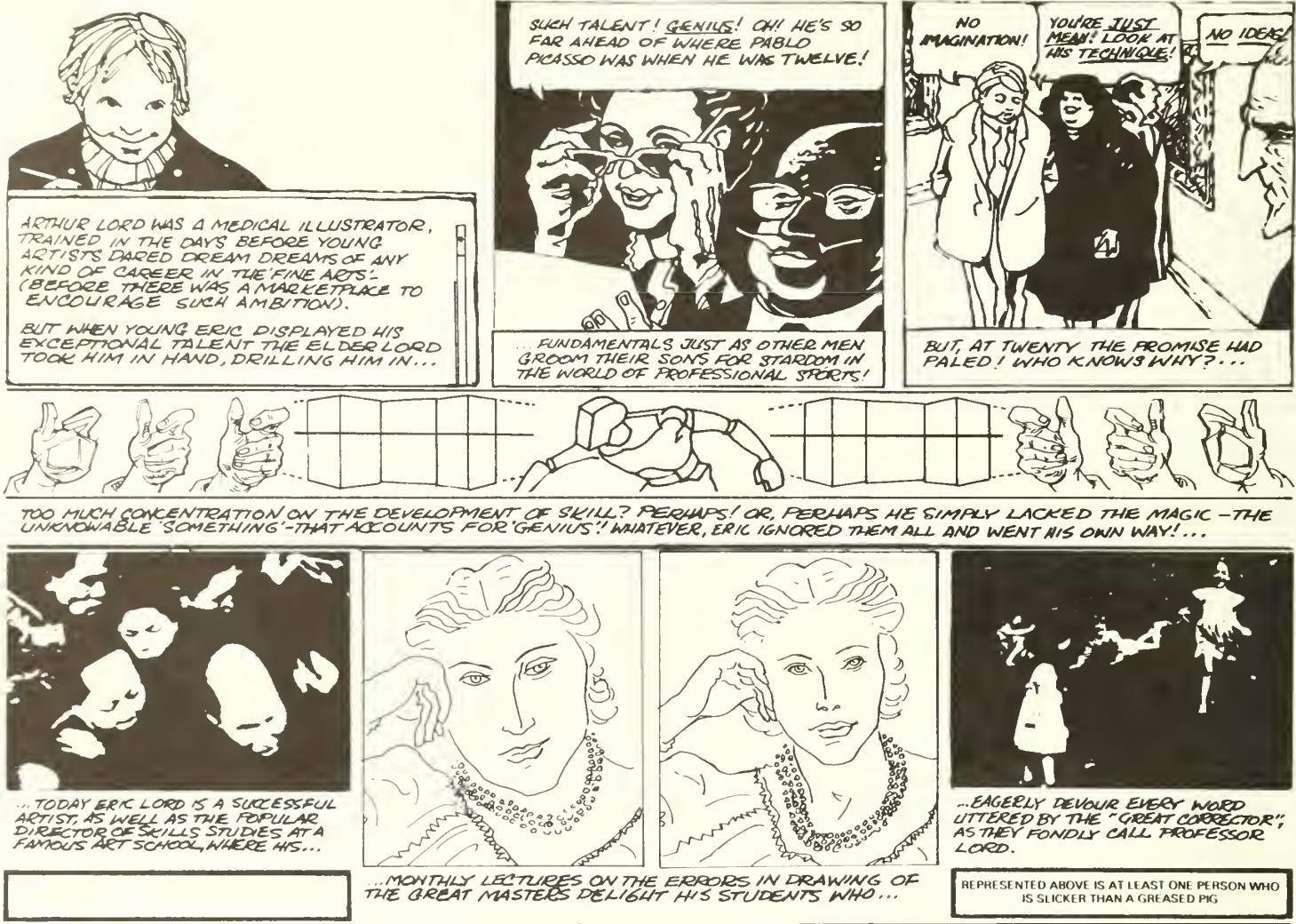
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# CROCODILE TEARS: THE GREAT CORRECTOR

By Douglas Huebler



**Variable Piece # 70  
(In Process)  
Global**

Throughout the remainder of the artist's lifetime he will photographically document, to the extent of his capacity, the existence of everyone alive in order to produce the most authentic and inclusive representation of the human species that may be assembled in that manner.

Editions of this work will be periodically issued in a variety of topical modes: '100,000 people,' '1,000,000 people,' '10,000,000 people,' 'people personally known by the artist,' 'look-alikes,' 'over-laps,' etc.

November 1971

—Douglas Huebler

**t**he Conceptual Comic strips reproduced here are from a series of ten which appeared in the *L.A. Weekly* between June 29 and August 30, 1984 having been commissioned by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art as part of its "In Context" program of monograph exhibitions. Like all his recent work, it finds its point of departure in the artist's Variable Piece #70, 1971, where the artist announces his intention to "document the existence of everyone alive," an ambition at the core of all his subsequent work.

## CROCODILE TEARS: BURIED TREASURE

By Douglas Huebler



t i d b i t s

from Douglas Huebler

**t**he most recent series of works by Douglas Huebler are the wall ensembles. Each consists of a replication of an historical painting that Huebler has hand-copied and juxtaposed with smaller framed panels of text, photographic images, and, recently, a printed illustration of the larger painting. The series, begun in 1985, is further divided into sub-sets based on notions or characters found in the 1981 screenplay, *Crocodile Tears*,

including Buried Treasure, the Great Corrector, the Signature Artist, Lloyd, etc. The sources for the paintings constitute a varied pantheon of art history from 16th-century Northern Renaissance genre paintings through 19th-century Hudson River School and impressionist landscapes to the early modern masterworks of Picasso, de Chirico, Matisse and Mondrian, and the more recent post-war abstraction of Ad Reinhardt.



**Crocodile Tears II: *Lloyd V***

Exterior, Deck of Summer Cottage in New England

Ellen stamps her foot to force **Lloyd** to look up from his cross-word puzzle.

**Ellen**  
(Angrily)

Darn you, Lloyd! I spend hours searching the beach to find perfect stones for my Zen garden and you just keep on throwing them at the poor squirrels. I'm not going to tell you again to stop it! I mean it! *Stop!*

**Lloyd**

Okay! Fine! I'll just start shooting the little sons of bitches!

**Ellen**

No sir, you will not! You promised! No discrimination at our feeder. We agreed to welcome everyone!

**Lloyd**

*Birds!* We agreed to let every kind of *bird* feed here! And I've let them! Blue jays, grackles, doves, and sparrows all eat alongside the cardinals and goldfinches! I even go along with the chipmunks.

**Ellen**

Then why do you pick on the squirrels?

**Lloyd**

They're pigs! They scare off the birds and hog-up everything.

**Ellen**

Come on! That's only natural. Besides, we've got plenty of seed.

**Lloyd**

You won't talk like that when we come back here some summer and find squirrels living in the house. Ask anyone! Let 'em hang out and when your back is turned they'll eat right through the walls and you'll play hell trying to get rid of them. Maybe you want to risk that but I don't. And won't! I'm about to let them know that they're not welcome around here!

**Ellen**

Lloyd! If you kill even *one* squirrel all the joy I've ever felt from watching the birds feed would die with it. I know I'd never even want to come back here again.

**Lloyd**

Whoa, sweetheart! Slow down! Look, it's getting late! Why don't you go on over to the beach and we'll talk some more when you get back.

**Ellen**

Oh, no! I'm not going without you today! I don't trust leaving you here alone after what you've been saying. Anyway, I want you to find enough Zen rocks to pay me back for every single one that you've thrown away.

***Represented above is at least one person  
whose heart is in the right place***





**Crocodile Tears II: Howard**

"I'm a charter member of the KKK."

That hooked them. Then: "KKK! Kafka, Kirchner, and Kunzler. The three artists most in touch with the pulse of modern man. Who feel his anguish. Know how to describe the formlessness of his anxiety."

Now he'd reel them in. "Only Kunzler's left. I carry on the work for all three of us today. How? Synthesis! You know. By joining our voices into the single most compelling statement that can be made about our time. I do it through my paintings. Really! Come to my studio and see for yourself."

So they'd go. Then word got around. Another rehash of German Expressionism! Not one gallery was willing to show his paintings. He grew bitter. People began to avoid him. He dropped out and painted in solitude. Years passed by. Movements too. He ignored them all. Pop. Op. Conceptual. Then Expressionism returned. It was selling like hot cakes.

Howard rejoiced. He was right back in the old ball game.

At long last Howard's dedicated effort was to be acknowledged. And rewarded! He strode back into the marketplace to collect his due . . .

And came up empty-handed. His paintings had the right look but he didn't. Too old! The new images, forms, ideas—everything—belonged to the kids . . . It was all too clear that the sensibility of this middle aged crank came from another place, another time. Howard was simply not marketable . . .

***Represented above is at least one person  
who is always the life of the party***



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# SIDNEY SIMON

## “*Freewheeling*”

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### By April Kingsley

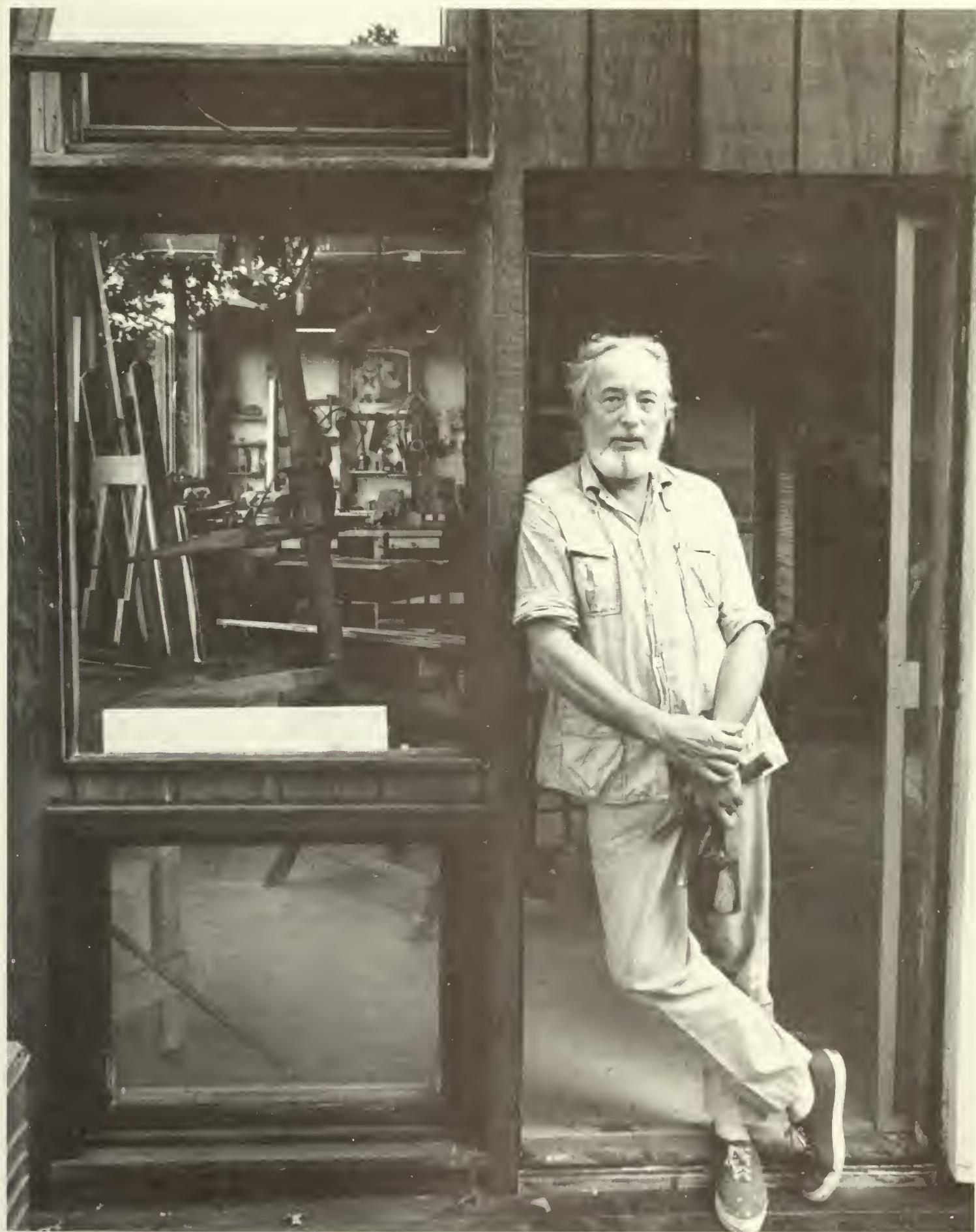
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It is true that all of Sidney Simon's work is solidly, physically based in the medium he is using, be it painting or drawing, carving, molding reliefs, making assemblages, or casting in bronze. Simon is an inordinately versatile and inventive artist, able to work skillfully in more media than most artists ever even attempt, and there is simply no pinning him down to a single kind of work or style. He seems to have an endless supply of ideas, but more importantly, he has an emotional range wide enough to give each different concept individual expression. The “Stone and Bone” series has a generic naturalness with its interchangeable units of earth and anatomy; the “Mirror Series” is theatrical, the figures interacting, reflecting each other across a non-existent mirror in a kind of literalization of the Cubist concept of viewing the subject from all sides at once. Simon's “Beach Series” (inspired by Truro's nude beach) deals with the action of intense light on earthbound figures and the formal function of shadows, while his “Circus Series” concerns the figure free in space. Light-hearted portraits of tennis players devised out of re-arranged tennis racquets make up the “Art Racket Series” (Simon is active in the Provincetown-Truro tennis circle), but his monumental *Birthstone*

is an image of female fecundity on a level of high-seriousness comparable to any feminine idol in the history of art. Work based on his own life, like the compelling family portraits on which he's been working for years, is often poignant, sometimes profoundly affecting. An over-lifesize 1976 self-portrait, *Father*, in which the standing male nude proffers a baby like a sacrificial lamb, exorcises the tremendous emotional pain he felt after the traumatic birth of his second son. Like all Conceptual Art, Simon's ideas are manifested physically but the forms they take are as unpredictable as his thought processes. Most Conceptual Art of the seventies, on the other hand, was actually quite predictable since it was usually the product of a logical chain of causality. Simon can be just as logical as the next person, but he never lets himself be caught in his own chains.

Sidney Simon's refusal to “fit in” or to conform to people's expectations has a great deal to do with his pluralistic art background:

When I went to Carnegie Tech I was exposed to all sorts of modern ideas—the Bauhaus and a lot of other things. The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, of course, gives students the tools they need to carry out work, and at the University of Pennsylvania I got psychology and philosophy. That's where my heart really is—with the thinking part of it.



**SIDNEY SIMON IN HIS TRURO STUDIO**

# SIDNEY SIMON

This is especially evident in Simon's large, multi-partite public art commissions, such as the Four Seasons Fountain complex installed this year on Manhattan World Wide Plaza. For instance, the randomly triune, open-work structure of the fountain's central bronze sphere (eleven feet in diameter and weighing two tons) owes its strength to engineering ideas he gleaned from architect friends at the University of Pennsylvania. Four female figures actually support the sphere, but he was able to make that happen without compromising their apparent dynamism because of the illusionist techniques he learned at the Pennsylvania Academy. And last but certainly not least important to him, the conceptual program of the fountain complex is richly and intricately symbolic: the four seasons with their four appropriate colorations, apparel and accoutrements, face in each of the four directions with characteristic behavior and gestures, and globally represent the four stages of life—birth, youth, maturity and death, or, as they are seen in oriental religions—youth, maturity, dying, and rebirth.

Born in Pittsburgh on May 21, 1917—which puts him on the cusp of Taurus fixity and Gemini versatility, a tough place to be—Sidney Simon gave himself as many-sided an education as it was possible to get in the thirties. At Carnegie Tech, not yet out of high school, he was a special student from 1931-36 studying both painting and sculpture. During the last two years he also attended summer school at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Typically, for he always seems to operate on at least two fronts at once, during his five full years at the Academy between 1936 and 1941, he simultaneously attended the University of Pennsylvania. The Academy thoroughly grounded him in the "how to" part of art, while Penn provided reasons for making art in the first place, reasons from the world of ideas in the literature and philosophy of the past. He roomed with architecture students at Penn, absorbing a number of subsequently useful structural ideas from them. As if all that weren't enough, during three of those years he also studied painting at the legendary Barnes Foundation in Merion, just outside Philadelphia, where he began to come to terms with modern art, or at least Impressionism. He was not yet prepared for the abstractness and audacity of Henri Matisse, who came to Merion for a visit some time after his murals for Barnes had been completed.

Simon enlisted in the army in December 1941. He relates, "They thought I was a genius because I had 13 years of master's college credit, so they put me in charge of organizing a group of overseas combat artists for the War department." Simon was an official observer on ten amphibious landings and was with the first group of American service men to enter Japan. He witnessed the surrender on the *USS Missouri* and recorded it on canvas. For fourteen months he had been active behind enemy lines on field reconnaissance missions in the South Pacific. That period he said, was "the most exciting, inspiring time of my life," adding that "it greatly affected the future of my work."

He learned things there from the "natives" that he never heard in all his years of art school. For instance, he achieved new insight into negative space and how impressions made in a material

can carry a positive record of human existence:

I was traveling through the villages with an army colleague when I discovered a pattern that kept recurring everywhere. It was repeated in huts, clothing, tools. It was an extremely simple couplet. A heart-like shape, and next to it the exact same shape only with a detail added where the curves converged. When asked about it, a bushman began to draw in the sand. He told me that when a woman squats down in the sand to rest and then gets up, there remains a mark like this. Then he drew the heart shape.

When a man squats down in the sand to rest he leaves a mark like this. Then he drew another rounded heart shape, only this time he added the detail that of course turned out to be his genitalia.

**E**ver since then Simon has been exploring the potential for meaning in negative shapes as well as positive ones, often using concavities so expressively they seem convex and full. *Catalyst*, 1964, is such a work, a bronze in which empty spaces stand in for a torso's positive forms pushing out from the body's roundness through the smooth shell of the work's interior concavity. This "inside" is a perfect cast of the body's outside—a negative which is a record of a positive. One can also easily trace the implications of this experience in Simon's 1972-4 series of *Birthstone* earth-mother-Venuses where the play of large convexities and concavities predominates. Often, here as elsewhere in Simon's work, small details in a sculpture—impressions of shells or bones but also of tools, nuts and bolts, pencils, screws; leaves raised in low relief, fingerprints left in the material matrix—are also present to remind one of the marks humanity makes on nature and nature on humankind.

But back when Simon first made these and other formal discoveries that would have far reaching effects on his work, he was still a painter, and a combat artist at that. His war art was shown in Australia and in our own National Gallery in Washington, D.C., as well as at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Still in uniform on his return in 1945, he helped start the Skowhegan School of Art in Maine. He married, his wife Joan bore their first child, Mark, and then, in 1948 they left for Paris, primarily to avoid the growing hostility to modern art being fomented by fanatical conservatives such as George Dondero, the Republican congressman from Michigan. His second child, Terhu, was born in Paris which at the time was filled with old radicals and young art students. He "studied" at the Grand Chaumerie, which meant he went to a certain place that had a warm heater and a model to work from without supervision or instruction. The Americans were so numerous and so unacademic they were segregated from the rest of the students in a room of their own. There they rented wall space since there wasn't enough room on the floor for all the easels.

In 1949, during a six month stay in the South of France, he paid a visit to Picasso. Kept waiting for ages outside the master's door, he discovered growing in the yard the strange plant roots that he realized had inspired Picasso's hairy creatures in the *Dream and*

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*Lie of Franco* and the tubular woven forms Dora Maar's physiognomy took in his 1937 and '38 portraits of her. (He pocketed some of the roots which he still plans to use in a portrait of Picasso some day.) When he was finally invited to join the master's table at a nearby restaurant, Picasso held court in French to about twenty friends and Simon never managed to exchange a word with him. He learned much more from a visit to Braque. Simon noticed that Braque made a separate palette for each painting and hung them on a tree in his studio. Braque told him that only four colors (one a neutral) were needed for a work and when the colors locked, you should bring in a "kicker" to spark them into interaction. Count the colors, he recommended, and avoid flags, such as the primaries. (It might be argued that Simon continues to use this advice in his sculpture in that he seems to establish a "palette" of materials and forms individually for each work.)

Back in the States by 1950, and with his wife active at *Partisan Review*, Simon was at the center of the intellectual and literary foment of the times. In his art, however, he remained steadfastly committed to representational painting, no matter how abstractly it might be structured. He was neither willing to "go abstract" nor to destroy compositional control by giving in to pure expressionism. In the mid-fifties he became increasingly interested in movement, and painting began to seem a less effective medium than sculpture in which to convey his concept of motion. Simon's mid-life shift to a second career as a sculptor caused great consternation among his painter friends, some of whom still don't forgive him for his defection from their ranks. The fifties was a painting decade, but the sixties was a time for sculpture, so Simon would seem to have made a fortuitous move. However, the kind of work that Simon produced when he first began making sculpture in 1956 was modular, minimal, and abstract and by the time these interests became dominant in the sixties (Minimalism or ABC art), Simon had shifted back again to a concern with figural representation, and, what's worse, with symbolic and narrative ideas. (During the sixties he also ended his first marriage, and, by the early seventies he had begun his second family with his wife Renee.)

Undoubtedly because of his early association with architects, Sidney Simon's sculptural work has more often involved large public commissions than small scale pieces for the delectation of private collectors, though his fertile imagination is probably given more latitude in those situations. "I can freewheel all over the place," he once remarked, and perhaps his involvement with architectural commissions has resulted, on some level, from his acknowledging the benefits of delimitation that come with having to fill specific needs. Simon's first major sculptural work was designed in 1956 for architect Richard Green's Temple Beth Abraham in Tarrytown, New York. It consists of a 28 foot high, 6 foot square openwork entryway column of bronze and steel with enclosed units of stained glass symbolizing important events in Jewish tradition. This column supports the roof it passes through to become a tower in the shape of Moses' tablets, topped by a Menorah. In addition to designing the column, a 12 foot bronze and wooden ark and some of the synagogue furnishings, Simon also

had one of the cement block synagogue walls built with a relief pattern of indentations in the shape of a Menorah. The image of the Menorah was positive on one side of the wall and negative on the other side.



ENTRYWAY COLUMN,  
TEMPLE BETH ABRAHAM

Building imagery into the structure in this manner was to be a crucial component of Simon's approach to commissions from then on. For Walt Whitman High School in Yonkers in 1958, he based his design on the words "shapes ever projecting other shapes," from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. He patented his invention of a key modular unit, or "facette" as he termed it, which generated an endless variety of other shapes depending upon its orientation and the way light fell on it. When light plays over the relieved surface of the school's cast concrete wall in which these facettes are unevenly distributed, it is animated by a great variety of dark and light geometrical shapes. The straight lines of the facette can be softened into curves for an organic version which can be manipulated even into vaguely figurative images. Isamu Noguchi, Constantine Nivola, and Harry Bertoia, all of whom executed sculptural architectural walls, were also busy working on problems of how positive and negative shapes can activate surfaces, but Simon feels his wartime experiences in the South Pacific gave him something of an edge in this area. The facettes were a big success,

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FACETTES ON WALT WHITMAN HIGH

and for just about the only time in his career Simon had a secure place in the Manhattan gallery world. But characteristically, he began to have nightmares, as he put it, that he'd be sitting down playing with blocks for the rest of his life, so he soon looked for other kinds of challenges.

In the early sixties Simon was commissioned by architect Lloyd Siegal to create a mobile for a three story atrium entrance to Woodland House in Hartford, Connecticut. This complex work ultimately included five half-lifesize figures of polyester Fibreglas patinated with goldleaf, and a steel sun and moon, hanging in a 27 by 13 foot space. A tightrope walker on one side of the mobile balances himself and four trapeze artists hanging one below the other on the other side. The figures are solid, unlike Calder's wire circus performers, but their bodies are expressively distorted to convey the physical strain of their actions. As they turn suspended in front of a wall of glass, light emphasizes various planes of their bodies, putting other planes in shadow, making the figures seem to move. Completed in 1962, this commission provided a treasure trove of ideas, which he continued to explore in his "Acrobat Series" over the ensuing years. In works like *The Star* he was able to use the heavier material cocobollo wood, a favorite of his, and in one version copper pennies form the figure's headdress. Polyester Fibreglas is both lightweight and extremely strong. Its ability to take sharp casts and its flexibility as to surface characteristics and coloration make it an ideal medium for a sculptor with a lot of ideas like Simon, but he also likes to use found objects, carve directly, and cast bronze. All methods at his disposal are called into play for recent work like his group of family portraits. Marisol and to a lesser extent William King and Mary Frank also like to work in a composite manner, varying materials, stylistic approaches, and techniques within a given piece. All four artists have similarly fecund imaginations.

Simon was able to execute such a physically large commission as the one for Woodland House—engineering its motion and balancing the weighty elements in space—because he had access to

huge scenic design studios in Manhattan. In the fifties he had been designing and building sets for such Broadway plays as *Ulysses in Nighttown*, *A Thurber Carnival*, *Major Barbara* and *Time Remembered*. He commuted to New York from Rockland County, where he was living at the time, to work on these sets and later to make the Woodland House acrobats and the large animals for a playground in Brooklyn's Prospect Park. Designing sets he worked with master craftsmen to whom he could turn for advice about tricky engineering problems in his own sculpture, and he also had a space big enough to try out large sculptural configurations and see how they would work before they were finally installed.

The most emotionally compelling of Simon's public sculpture complexes is installed in Our Lady of the Angels Seminary in Glenmont, New York. He worked on it in 1964 and '65, again using polyester Fibreglas covered with metallic leaf for the main element, an over lifesize silver Crucifixion. The body of Christ is powerfully expressive and surprisingly free of the kind of church art sentimentality that is characteristic of the late 20th century. The figure is animated by both anatomically-correct and unexpected convexities and concavities, making it seem to breathe. The artist's hand is in evidence everywhere, yet the light somehow unifies the surface into planes that seem smooth and skin-like. Thorns are fused into a real crown and Christ seems eminently kingly; the face is sharply sculpted yet seems to speak softly of infinite resignation; lines of world-weariness crease His face but He seems too pure to be of this earth. The Corpus is mounted on a cross made of aged chestnut beams attached to a wall-size screen of square brass and copper plates. Simon made a small bronze Corpus for the faculty chapel which is quite different in feeling, and a seven foot St. John out of terra cotta for the atrium pool. St. John leans forward eagerly as if in anticipation of his future baptism of Christ and of humanity's future salvation.

The West Point Jewish Chapel is probably Simon's best-known commission, partly because of the press coverage it received. Designed by architect Max Abromowitz, it acknowledged the Jewish presence at West Point for the first time. It was so significant that the President was expected to attend its dedication in the fall of 1985, according to an item in the *New York Times*. But, knowing that few would get to West Point to see it, Simon decided to exhibit the beautiful Ark curtain that had been woven by Paula Renee from his design. To his horror, it was stolen from Long Point Gallery in Provincetown during that summer. Nothing like that ever happened in the gallery before or since. There was no time to weave another before the President was to cut the string at the opening ceremony, so every effort was made to encourage the thief to restore it to Simon. Notices were placed all over New England and police were alerted to look out for information as to its whereabouts. Miraculously, at the end of an anxious couple of months and dangerously close to the deadline, someone called the police to say they had it and would return it if no charges were pressed or identities given out. This too, of course, made the papers. For the exterior of the chapel Simon had designed large bronze tablets (ten by six feet overall), their surfaces etched with

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references to the Twelve Tribes. These tablets are connected through a 50 foot high window to the Ark on the interior. When the butternut and gold leaf Ark doors are closed the silhouette coincides with that of the Tablets outside. Curvilinear facettes comprise the relief patterns on the closed doors. When the Ark is open the *Tree of Life* curtain is revealed in the lighted space within.

Though he continues to design important medals and to execute smaller commissions of various kinds, Simon's major projects in recent years have been public fountains. His large Four Seasons complex in Manhattan was discussed earlier. In Philadelphia's Graham building on City Hall Plaza, the "Delaware River God" rises up to squirt a stream of water into a shell proffered by the "Schuylkill Maiden." The naked goddess, riding in a giant clam shell like Aphrodite rising from the sea, playfully throws water back at the satyrical god. "On her sweet face she [Aphrodite] always wore an amiable smile," and so does our goddess; river gods are classically associated with piscatorial abundance and fecundity, and in that, the god of the Delaware is no different than the god of the Tiber. For practical reasons, however, these modern figures are not made of marble or bronze fountains but rather of Fibreglas with a green patina. But they function today just as they always have; they provide a place where one can go to be refreshed, spiritually if not literally. They are like the holy wells and the public watering places to which all humankind has returned over and over again to be replenished throughout the ages. Though the styles, the techniques, the materials and the artists may change, the concept remains the same. One would be hard put to find an artist

more able to understand and to find appropriate artistic ways to deal with such projects than Sidney Simon, for whom the idealistic component is ever uppermost in his mind. □□

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**THE SCHUYKILL MAIDEN AND THE DELAWARE RIVER GOD, 1986**

## ANNA POOR



MARCH, 1989



# HARES & RABBITS

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By Ann Wilson Lloyd

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When Alice fell down what turned out to be a very Jungian rabbit hole, she encountered some powerful, resounding symbols—a pool of tears, a key, a pack of bungling playing cards caught up in an arbitrary game of life, and a host of other enigmatic and unhelpful characters.

These symbols are so authentic, their emotional effects so lingering, that *Alice in Wonderland*, supposedly a children's story, has generated countless adult essays and commentary through the last 100 years. Lewis Carroll, for instance, has been likened to a Victorian Dante; his Alice to Dante's inspiring Beatrice; and, it follows, Wonderland to hell. As Alice's frustratingly elusive guide through this hell, Lewis Carroll chose a rabbit, a primitive archetypal symbol—the hare in folklore's hero myth is the archetype symbol of both savior and

culture-giver—and he did so fifty years before Jung published his theories of the collective unconscious and its confluent myths and symbols.

While tapping so many levels, the Alice stories remain subtle, sophisticated in their innocence. They portray the absurdities of a world askew through the pure logic of a child. Alice dreams a chaotic dream that has no moral, and, like life, is never really resolved. She is tossed haphazardly on the storms of chance from one enigma to another, embodied by symbols that at first seem seductively commonplace, yet reveal themselves to be profound. White rabbits, innocuous enough, turn out to be as vague and slippery as answers to dilemmas. The symbols in Alice's dream provoke because of their Hitchcockian shifting of expectations and subtle turns over the edge of reality. The symbols remain effectively relevant with staying power through generations of readers.

True symbols engage both our con-

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scious and our unconscious with equal force. They are objects, according to Jolande Jacobi, a Jungian writer and analyst, "of the known world hinting at something unknown; . . . expressing the life and sense of the inexpressible." A symbol may be a name, an object, or an idea, Jung said, which is familiar in daily life, yet which possesses specific connotations in addition to conventional and obvious meanings, implying something vague, unknown, or hidden from us.

Poets and artists so inclined search for the comprehensive symbol, one with familiar associations to seduce the conscious mind while its messages resonate into the unconscious. It's a search that's increasingly hampered by what Umberto Eco describes as the lack of a common code shared by sender and recipient. The receiver of any symbolic messages today, Eco says, "seems to have a residual freedom: the freedom to read it in a different way."

The universal symbol must be cross-cultural, but it is also culturally crossed, confused by modern media bombardment. Symbols run the risk of being neutralized by overexposure, as well as being merely drawn from a cast of personal icons, as opposed to what pop art critic Nicolas Calas defines as true icons: "Pictures of reality or of dreams that have crucial cultural impact." They have less to do—despite telecommunication and the increasingly communal global village—with graphic signage and the hieroglyphics of communication, than with universal myth and the collective unconscious; and therefore by nature are shadowy, dream oriented, and difficult to pin down.

**T**he artist then who communicates most overtly through symbols, like Anna Poor of Truro and Jamaica Plain, faces hurdles from the start. From all the icons swirling about her, she must sort out the merely personal from the true, discern their commonality, and alluringly convey that to the viewer. Currently in the thick of it, Poor in past months has fallen headlong into her own rabbit hole of recurring symbols

and, like Alice, has found herself dealing with enigma with elusive answers and even dwarfed by her symbols' increasing proportions.

Poor has metaphorically opened up her earlier works—small pictorial carved wooden reliefs where her designated symbols carried on a static dialogue—and has stepped inside. She is removing their components—the baseball bats, martini glasses, and coffee cups—and has begun to render them in isolation, as carved wooden sculptures in sizes larger than life, larger even than the artist.

Poor's lexicon of symbols has some things in common with Lewis Carroll's symbols. They are surfacey innocuous, garbed in attractive colors, and executed in a naive, seemingly folk-art style of slightly skewed perspective and rough-hewn texture. Most of them are common household objects or emblems: baseball bats, flashlights, light bulbs, scissors, saltines, paper cups, globes, clouds, water, and flames, all of which supply the artist with a complex network of associations.

Poor concedes that symbol definition is a tricky problem, that viewers may be attracted by her work's easy affability, its folkish style, and bright clear colors. Often their response is that the work is funny, "suggestive," or, to her what is most abhorrent, whimsical. All the while, it's nothing less than chaos that she's trying to convey—life's element of chance and the constant threat of impending disaster, bound together with her underlying socio-economic consciousness. Poor is absorbed, she says, in the perennial questions of "why people are where they are, the accident of their birth, why some are born into a war zone and others into wealth, how each survives their own disasters." To more effectively convey her concerns, Poor has recognized the need to boost her symbols' transmitting powers: she is enlarging them, making them visually "louder"; attaching single-word didactics to them; and choosing objects that are aimed more directly at our emotional buttons—serpents, guns, knives, and most recently under progress, a hypodermic needle.

To be effective, she feels her symbols should provoke a "push me-pull you" effect; a tensional quality that each object upon reflection perhaps, if not immediately, will exert upon the viewer. In an interview at her studio in a wooden building that used to house a rubber factory in the slightly seedy Egleston Square area of Jamaica Plain, she discloses some of the rationale behind her choices.

In her previous small wall-hung reliefs, carved wooden objects are proportioned, brightly painted, and collaged onto carved landscape-like settings. Coffee cups, saltines, and sticks of butter float in the sky over harbors, planets hover lower down, and things like playing cards, knives, and snakes show up in corners.

"They are symbols of survival and they fall into certain categories," she says. "The coffee cups and the saltines are necessary food, modern bread and water, jail food. And then there's luxury items, symbols of decadence, like the martini and the olive or the sick of butter. Weapons can be used either way, as tools, as self-defense, or threat against another person. There's also chance, which has to do with the serpent, the cars, or dice."

She's drawn to unsettling themes of disaster and self-defense, she says, because, "I'm constantly half a step in front of impending disaster. Not natural disaster. I feel global concern, but it's more individual violence, violence against each other, the violence that poverty creates in environments and living situations of the smaller people."

**S**troking a sculpture under progress, an eight-foot wooden replica of a kitchen knife, she muses on the ambiguity inherent in common objects. "This knife can go either way. You can use it to protect yourself or somebody can stab you with it. It's also a tool; you can cut bread with it. Hide it under your bed, and it suggests domestic violence."

On a deeper level, a knife can also replicate itself. It can be used to carve large wooden sculpture knives, which, especially if they're big enough, might possibly exorcise some personal demons.

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When asked if her work is an attempt to wrest some kind of control over chaos, a confronting of her fears about it, Poor, perhaps like Alice at the beginning of her dream, is unaware for now. That idea, she says, has not occurred to her. "It's an interesting question. I never thought of that, never thought of that at all. These big pieces are still in a new stage for me. Before, when they were smaller and in a rectangular format, there would be questions and answers contained in the same piece; each item, icon, or symbol would relate to something else in the piece. Right now it's difficult, because I'm just making the pieces and I haven't worked it all out together. My vision is to make these images that I'm drawn to; to make them large and then make an environment with them in the same way I did with the little pieces. I'm still on automatic pilot. I don't know exactly where I'm going."

She has noticed, however, that her colors are undergoing a more subtle change. While most urban-influenced work is black, dirty, and gritty, Poor's, up to now, has been painted in bright, clear, and pleasant colors, not immediately suggestive of danger, fear, or chaos. This, she says, was an attempt to catch the viewer off guard, to be visually appealing and subtly hit them with the fact that there are "uncolorful" themes in her work. "The colors are getting darker, but I've always felt that if you don't entice the viewer to come towards the piece, you've lost them. You have to get them in the first instant, to draw them in. I've seen lots of work where the initial response is 'Oh God, that's so ugly!' and you're not drawn any further to investigate it. But I'm a traditional artist in a sense that I really want people to be attracted to the pieces, in a physical, sensual attraction. Tactilely, I am attracted to them, especially the big pieces because they're my size; they're almost human. I also find the carving

marks seductive."

She says she's aware that those carving marks, the crudeness of the surfaces, remind people of the naivete of folk art. "I don't have a problem with it. It relates to folk art in the sense that it really doesn't fit in, and in its clumsiness too, I suppose. People like to label everything. It's comforting, but it kind of stretches the boundary of what in my mind is a folk artist—someone who is totally obsessed and doing art in a vacuum. I am totally obsessed, and

then moved on to discard refinement in her objects in favor of a less precious, more demanding presence.

"I was tired of my work being so polite. I was dealing with issues that felt important to me, but the work was so well bred and contained, hanging politely on the wall. So, I thought, Jesus, why not make my concerns, pain and fear, the size they really are, large. Either they like it or they hate it, but it's there; it can't be ignored. And the funny thing is the pieces get bigger and bigger. I just keep going and each piece gets bigger."

Bigness carries with it some mythic, unconscious, as well as some conscious, popular connotations. There's that dream-like quality that Alice experienced of actually shrinking, powerless and impotent, amidst common household items, which then take on a hulking dominance. But on a conscious level, outsized common objects are currently also very kitsch. Advertised in national magazines, the popular New York City store called "Big" offers ordinary objects, fountain pens and paper clips, faithfully reproduced in giant proportions, inspired perhaps by pop artist Claes Oldenburg's big soft sculptures. A viewer aware of Oldenburg's objects, which he saw not as symbols but as an attempt to, in his words, "give the object back its power," is subject to more conscious cross fire, a fact Poor brings up herself. Her viewers' previous experiences with these well-known outsized objects cause them to bring the same expectations to her work, with the possibility of masking its initial impact.

For the artist who's dealing so heavily in contemporary symbols, these are daunting factors. Whatever signals Poor's large objects generate, they face becoming scrambled on airwaves increasingly crowded with conflicting and overpower-

*(continued on page 177)*



I am doing it in somewhat of a vacuum, but I have a good understanding of art history and where things come from. I do feel out of the mainstream. I keep myself there. I just do what I do. I look at the magazines every so often and I go to shows, but I'm on my own path, looking for my personal Rosetta Stone."

She describes that path as a spiraling one. A few years ago, she set out to carve her own "found objects," mastered them to the point of reality, and lost interest,



*Fire, 1982*

Carmen Cicero

# Crossover Dreams

*Provincetown Arts asked three artists to look more closely at their decisions to move from one discipline to another. A musician-turned-artist, a dancer-turned-writer and a musician-turned-writer arrived at very different assessments of their crossovers, ranging from pure expediency to the discovery of a true calling.*

**By Jill Bloom**

What makes an artist choose a particular medium? Is it an attraction to the form itself, or to the best method of expressing a statement? Ask a dozen artists and there will be a dozen answers. Many will be honest if they admit that they have no idea, that the process by which they arrive at form as well as content is a mysterious one.

But talk to artists who have moved successfully between several media, or who have gone from one to another, and there is likely to be a bit more reflection involved. Why did the artist make the switch? What was gained, and what sacrificed? What skills carry over from one to the other and what adjustments must be made?

Provincetown Arts asked three artists to look more closely at their decisions to move from one discipline to another. A musician-turned-artist, a dancer-turned-writer and a musician-turned-writer arrived at very different assessments of their crossovers, ranging from pure expediency to the discovery of a true calling.



**Musician-turned-artist: Carmen Cicero**

Carmen Cicero, a figurative expressionist painter who shows at New York's Graham Modern and June Kelly Galleries and at Provincetown's Long Point Gallery, was trained classically on clarinet as a young man. He planned on a career as a concert musician, but, in the early fifties, he was drawn from the classical path by the music of Charlie Parker. "Every jazz musician has a

## Crossover Dreams

Charlie Parker epiphany," he says. "Parker, like Dylan Thomas and Jackson Pollock (two other strong influences on Cicero's work) completely abandoned himself to art and destruction. It was very romantic, very energizing to a young man in those times."

Cicero talks of the sublime politics that infused Parker's artistry, enabling Parker to "win converts without revealing ideologies. That's why it's art—because it's truth." Although he continued his classical training, Cicero had been worn over by "the superior thoughts" of jazz. He took up the alto saxophone.

Although music was his first love, he did not attempt a career as a musician. Instead, at Newark State Teachers College, he fell under the influence of the art department and found that he had a natural affinity for painting. "At first, I imitated them all, in turn—Picasso, Braque, the Surrealists, the Cubists. My teachers would say, 'Well, Carmen, who are you going to be today?'"

Just as he had experienced an epiphany in his music, Robert Motherwell's stupendous "Elegy for the Spanish Republic" changed Cicero's life as a painter. Like Parker's music, Motherwell's painting was Art as Truth. "I realized that painting was not a matter of reproducing what one saw, but of examining how one felt. In those days, that was an intriguing proposition for me. I went from being a young imitator directly into being a member of the Abstract Expressionist movement."

Cicero's work was soon hanging in galleries and museums nationwide. He was included in six Whitney bi-annuals. He received a Guggenheim Grant in 1957 and again in 1963. "Yes, I have a talent as a painter. First and foremost, I think of myself as a painter. It's a labor of passion, a total commitment with little thought for the results. When I had my first show I was blown away. I totally forgot that you could get paid for this."

His work gradually moved from abstract expressionism to figurative representation as he began a "passionate exploration of human figures and human conditions, drawing from popular imagery and culture as well as from interior emotional sources." His current work is both primitive and powerful, with darkness and deep jewel tones creating an aura of sensuality and mystery. "His personal imagery," writes critic Ronny Cohen, "poetic crescent moons, strange flowers, dark city skylines—has an enormous emblematic power. The pictorial vitality [of his work] stimulates our own outpouring of ideas and feelings."

Yet he remains a musician at heart. "I used to think there were two totally different languages—the visual language of painting and the auditory language of music, but the magical effect they have is the same in both. I literally feel a golden atmosphere around me when I'm making good music, or when I'm painting—I get caught in my own spell."

He has been able to find strong similarities in his work as a painter and in the jazz avocation he still pursues. "The most significant style in both my art and my music, as far as I'm concerned, is eclecticism—you draw inspiration from or make allusions to a variety of sources. The goals are the same; you use what you need to achieve your results. There's nothing impure about it."

Cicero's sources and inspirations are similar in both media—beautiful imagery, love, urban fantasies, urban angst. His creative methodology, too, has a common element. "In painting, when you start out, you're inspired. Then, while you're bringing it to fruition, it's a mechanical process. It's the same with music. You fall in love with a tune, and then work out the particulars." Cicero listens to all kinds of music while he paints, and sometimes to talk shows to "clean out his brain." Despite his love affair with jazz, Mozart is his favorite composer.

Yet he finds many differences between his painting and his music. "In the painting world, there's little consensus about who's good and who's bad. In the music world, everybody knows who the monsters are. And painting is a solitary profession, whereas music is a socializing force—you have to play in front of people, play in groups, establish a rapport with other musicians.

"I improvise in both fields, and the sources may be the same. But you don't necessarily explore the same theme at the same time. And I'm not sure that my painting enhances my art or vice versa. They require very different skills." Still, his work on the 1988 *Flying Down to Rio*, for instance, influenced his choices of music at the time. In keeping with the painting's references to old movie nostalgia and romantic South Seas lovers, he found himself exploring a nostalgic and romantic mood when playing his saxophone. "Over a period of time, my choices about music might reflect what I'm painting, or what I'm thinking about when I'm painting."

There are practical aspects to his decision to make painting his life's work and jazz his life's ambition. "The joy of keeping music and art together is excruciating. I could practice eight hours a day—spend every day all day with music, and love it. But the economics don't work: you can't make a living as a musician, not even as a monster musician. And as a painter, there are demands. You have to have a body of work."

He misses his music. After all this time, Cicero still longs for "that exquisite moment" when everybody in the band is working perfectly together and the whole transcends the part, when his feelings are perfectly communicated to the other musicians and to the audience. After a 25-year career, "It's still easier for me to play, and more painful for me to paint."

## Crossover Dreams



### **Musician-to-writer: Alec Wilkinson**

Alec Wilkinson looks back on his career as a musician with a shrug. Author of two well-received books and staff writer for *The New Yorker*, Wilkinson has written, in "prose as plain as water," about Provincetown's Blessing of the Fleet, his year as a Wellfleet cop, his stay with a North Carolina revenue agent who busts moonshiners for a living, and Hudson River riverkeeper John Cronin.

But he got his degrees in music at Bennington College in Vermont, played the mandolin and guitar, and performed with several rock and roll bands in Vermont and on the Cape. He gave up music—"walked away from it totally"—at 24. "I just ran out of gas," he explains.

On the surface, Wilkinson's choice of music was as haphazard as his subsequent decision to write. "It was the '60s, you know. Girls liked guitar players. I played in bar bands at college, but I guess I really had no ambition to do it. After graduation, I came down to the Cape looking for something to do. I decided to try to get a job as a Wellfleet policeman and do it for one year. After the year was over, my older brother, who is a free-lance writer, said, 'You should write a book about it.' Since I had made the decision to spend the year, it would have been a waste of time if I hadn't

done anything with it."

With the help of family friend, William Maxwell, retired editor from the *New Yorker*, Wilkinson put his book together, "totally backwards. I just laid everything out on the floor and put it all together in order. I only found out, after ten years and three books, how everybody else does it."

But the instincts of a strong reporter and a disciplined writer were already there, and, as Wilkinson thinks about it, he allows that there are some connections between his music and his writing. "I don't think the discipline of writing was learned by the discipline of music. But maybe I'm wrong. And the rhythm of my sentences appears to be important to my writing. An intense immersion between the ages of 10 and 22 in rock and roll left me with certain patterns of speech, much like a regional dialect. I suppose those rhythms are there."

"As far as pacing, dynamics, and the rules of composition, if you've studied them in one way, they become the rules that you can use in another way. If I had become a painter, I would probably think of my painting in terms of how rhythm affects the eye. But that's not to say that I'd be any good at it."

Besides, being a musician was simply not realistic. "The practical matters of being a writer are much more easily solved than those of being a musician. Musicians just play and there's nothing to show for it. Writers get paid. Writing is convenient. You can live and write. For musicians, there's also the technical aspect of having to stay in shape. I stopped playing for one week and realized I couldn't go back. There was a certain frustration level to that, because it limited my ability. Anyway, I liked writing a lot better."

Despite his deceptively lackadaisical attitude, writing doesn't always come easily to Wilkinson. His lack of academic training ensures a fresh voice but not without "doing it all ass backwards first." Solving the "tricky little turns" of investigative reporting as done at *The New Yorker* has presented a whole new set of problems. Despite the stewardship of Maxwell and now John McPhee, "I was getting a lot of bad advice."

But Wilkinson is understandably content with his working situation. "Life at *The New Yorker* is based on doing the work you want to do. The equivalent music job would be in a band, where you could show up when you wanted and know that you'd get to play."

"I was trained to write in a style particular to the magazine, which is to say, the story advances line by line and word by word instead of page by page. I feel pretty fortunate about where I ended up."

### **Dancer-to-Writer: Toni Bentley**

Toni Bentley never wanted to become a writer. She was born and bred to dance, and joined George Balanchine's New York City Ballet, the pinnacle of the classical dance world, at 17. "I always wanted to be a dancer," she says, "but I was so busy being a dancer

*(continued on page 167)*

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*Evergon*

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*Evergon*



*Young Boy in Military Uniform, 1986, Polaroid diptych*

“

I never use my real name. Not professionally. Evergon was a gift. The name came from a period in my life when I was quite sad. I was upset that a lover had died, and I was depressed. On the way to a party, someone used a French expression, *tourjours parti*, which means always stoned or always leaving. Translated, it was Evergon. It was a translation of a slang phrase from the 60s which meant out of it, or going upward out of the world. Evergon is a joke. The woman who gave it to me had very bad English. When we got to the party, everyone was introducing me as Evergon: a person stuck in the present. I stuck with Evergon a long time and he became the central figure of my work.

What is it like to work with Evergon? Wonderful. Wacky. Participatory and relaxing. Why am I saying relaxing? It's hard work! Physically, it's hard. But Evergon can instill a sense of calm. He's turned on and energetic. It's often infectious, at least for the model. (River Karmen, Wellfleet photographer and model for Evergon.)

I have always used models. I originally started to photograph because my drawings took too long. So that people would not have to sit so long, I would photograph them, and have them come back to sit only for the finishing up. But, of course, the photos were much more interesting than the drawings.

Myself, I hate being photographed. I'm aware that I'm uncomfortable. Even trying to get press photos, I take very bad photos. I become grumpy and self-conscious. If I do pose, I'm usually

severe and stern. When I made "The Aging Baccus," I wanted one of the models to play the part of Baccus. I never realized how much we looked alike until people started to say to me, "Oh, that's you in the photo."

In a sense, the whole thing of using models has become like a family, like a troupe. Of course, I am the organizer. I feel responsible for setting it up and making it work. I was looking at a video of me working. I said on tape, "I don't manipulate," but I saw that I did. But what I do is positive, not negative. A mother manipulates a baby for its own good.

*I have always been a wild person. I dress wild. I dress to be me and also I dress to cause a scene. I was labeled gay by my foster parents, not because they knew I had seduced a man when I was 13. For that I went to a hotel 20 miles away in San Antonio. I was notorious in my high school. I had long blonde curls and wore yellow overalls. I didn't start shaving till I was 21. My main focus in being in drag is to alter reality. I don't believe in current reality. The drag thing is of course a comment on costume. We all wear costumes. Even our face is a costume. A heterosexual transvestite is a different type of drag. I wear dresses and no makeup. I wear dresses and some makeup. I like to cross androgyny. Why can women wear pants and not be called drag queens? The attention that a handsome man gets is never as sweet as the attention a pretty woman gets. When I dress as a pretty woman, with my makeup on right, and my black gloves, people treat you well. Evergon and I are very similar. We both like to wear dresses. When we are together, I*

*become older and he becomes younger. He interviewed for his first teaching assignment wearing a dress. He had a bushy beard. That was a camp statement. (Kevin Driskel, Provincetown artist and Evergon model)*

In my work, I use up to five personas. One persona is a woman, Eve R. Gonsalves. The first seven letters of her name spell Evergon. Eve is about 84 years old now. I have been printing her work. I have to say it that way because Eve's too old to print herself. She has cataracts and sore feet, and she doesn't like the darkroom. As a result of working with Eve, we had to develop the fifth persona, "A.P." which stands for Anonymous Printer. A.P. is the person who does the printing for Eva. Eve has just come back from Europe where she's been, back and forth over the last four years. She arrived with 12,000 slides, which I've been editing. I'm aware there is a bit of irony in what I am saying, since I was also back and forth to Europe at the same time. People get confused when I start to talk to my personas, but actually they are like third persons to each other. They all collaborate at some point. And almost all the personas have their own camera, and ways of seeing. Most of the work you are printing in Provincetown Arts is by Celuloso Everonni. That persona has to do with the Italian Baroque. When I was in the South of France, I went with friends to the sunflower fields to do Van Gogh look alikes. On the way we passed a place called Celluloso Celluluci, a plastic factory. We started to play with the name, and that's how Everonni arrived.

## *Evergon*

*Working with Evergon on the 40 by 80 inch Polaroid camera, the only one in the world, is not like a fast action fantasy shoot out of Blowup. It's more like a rehearsal for the theater of the very slow. It can take half a day to set up and shoot one successful image. Since the camera is actually a room with two accompanying technicians, the image must be adjusted to the exact location and limitations of the camera. Evergon directs a composition element by element, body by body. He functions as a director. Indispensable to him is Raymond Whitney, his costumer, who puts naked bolts of cloth together with pins and spit, and who has such an immediate creativity in cloth. The repetition of test shots and making adjustments, during which the models cannot move, can be painfully tedious. All of us are squeezed into a very narrow depth of field. Perhaps that is why we achieve a joint sense of purpose. The images Evergon pulls out of us are extraordinarily lush. (F. Ronald Fowler, Provincetown artist and Evergon model)*

*The large format Polaroid camera, located at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, is the only existing camera of its kind. The image is life size. Evergon built a plexiglass platform. The model lay on the plexi, with a sheet behind him. Evergon shot up through the plexiglass. In one shoot, I was on a bar stool for two days leaning over backwards in a field that was less than two feet, from backdrop to glass. My nose was pressed flat to the glass. (Kevin Driskel)*

**That space was never meant for theater. The space is very limited. Whether there are models or not, the crew comes in. The primary thing is to**

get the set setup so that things proceed logically. We take turns playing all the different roles, so with a very small crew of only five or six we'll go through role changes. If a model is not in a scene, he can become a gopher.

*Working with Evergon on a Polaroid shoot is about process. The shots themselves are pure theater which develops from the group dynamic. We have all been "stars" and we have all been gofers. (Linda McCausland, Wellfleet photographer and model)*

**Part of the attraction of the large Polaroid is that I am free to share the image with the models. We get instant results from the camera. I seldom think of the audience for my work, perhaps because an audience is already there. I prepare with huge storyboards. Each of my personas has a collection of idea boards. I am a file-aphobe. I collect files. I cross hatch my ideas and cross reference my storyboards, putting images together that normally wouldn't be side by side. When I write grants, the personas support me. I submitted three different applications for my last photography grant. Egon Brut was submitting. So was Celluloso. So was Eva. Some people did not even suspect that it was all part of the Evergon body of work.**

**As time has gone on, and some of my work has become vogue or popular, I became limited by the very way I had become known. With the personas, I am much more at liberty to experiment, or do other bodies of work, without feeling pressured, either from the galleries or from reputation. Evergon's been going**

on since the early 70s. Personas have been picked up and played with along the way. I joke a lot. Eva is getting up in years. Presently she is quite infatuated with a younger printer. That is occupying a lot of her time. A.P. has just started to print her stuff, because I realize she can't see. She takes photographs half blind. It's more liberating than one could imagine.

*Evergon is always traveling. He has shows all over the world and he stays with friends. He lives like Rimbaud—a nomad with no address." (Claude Simard, Canadian artist and friend)*

*If you come from a place of love, it doesn't matter what you are trying to say. (Kevin Driskel)*

**This summer I will spend by myself, perhaps. Maybe I will spend it with my mother. Or I may go to South America with my lover, Bobo. I don't know. I have been on the road almost five years. I had no desire to be a nomad. But I found, after I lost my secretary, I was beginning to lose contact with things. I won't know until April 1 whether I go to Rome this spring. I've agreed to go tentatively, to design the set for a play. I've also started doing some sketches for holograms, which is totally new to me. I've got to spend some time in Toronto with people who make them so I will have a better handle on it. Most likely they will be under the Celluloso title because I want to continue that body of work. I have just got my own apartment, and I am happy to say that it has running water.**

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*Evergon*

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*Allegory of Germany and Italy, 1986, Polaroid triptych*



*The Chowder Maker, 1986, Polaroid triptych*

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*Evergon*

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*The Aging Baccus*, 1986, Polaroid diptych

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*Evergon*

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*The Male Siren, 1987, Polaroid*



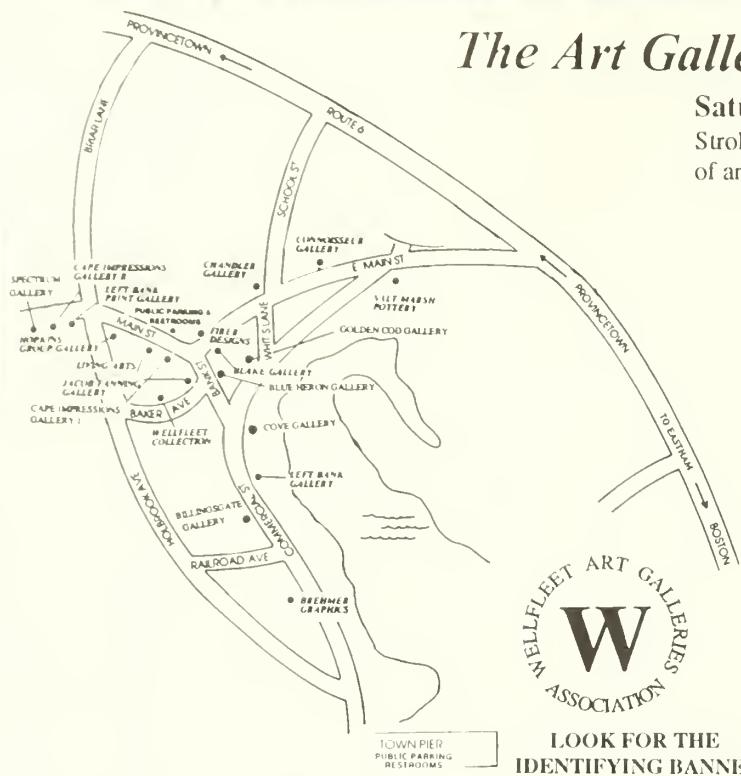
## *Evergon*



*Le Patin, 1986, Polaroid*

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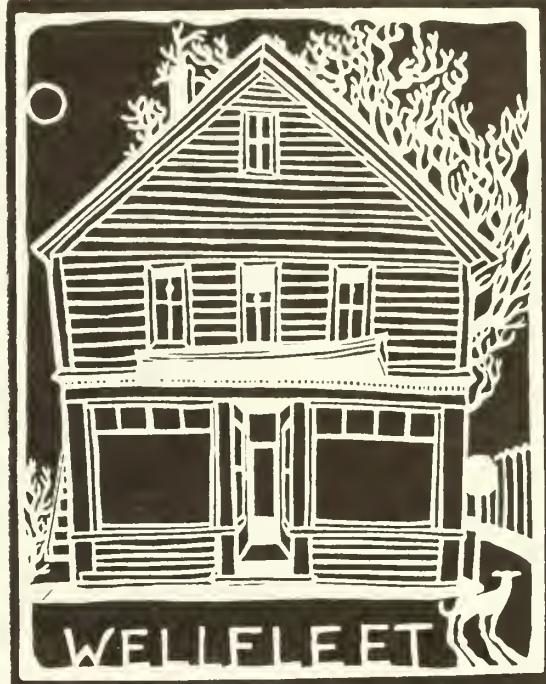
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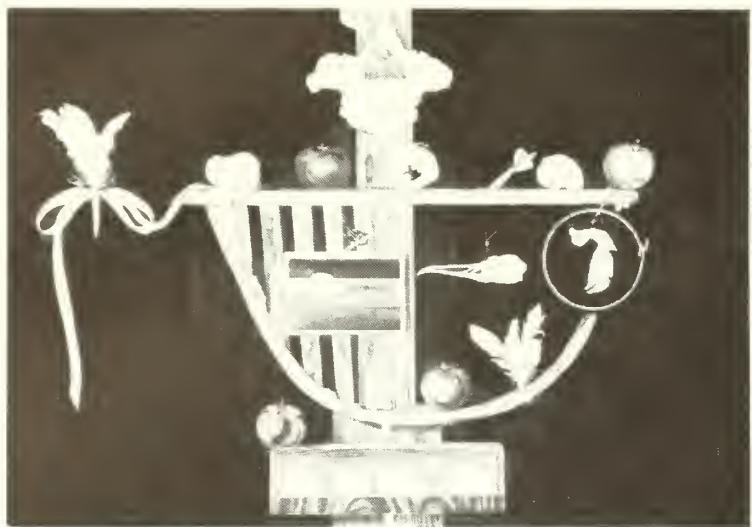
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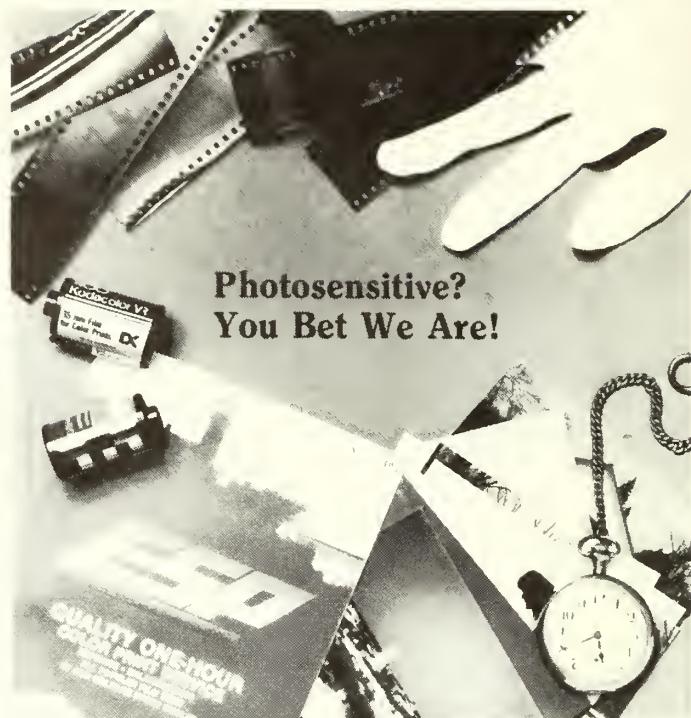
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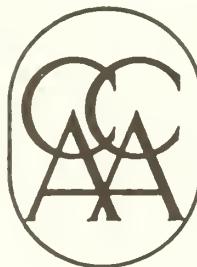
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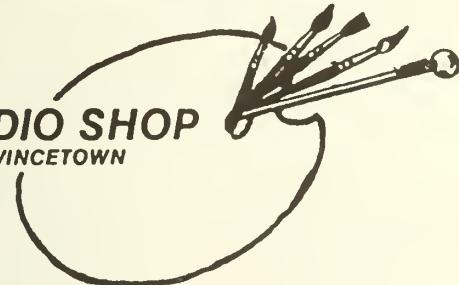
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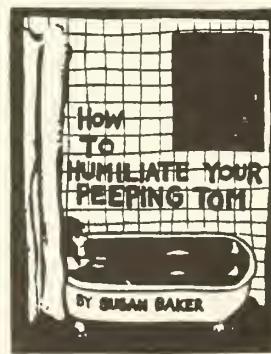
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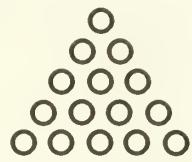
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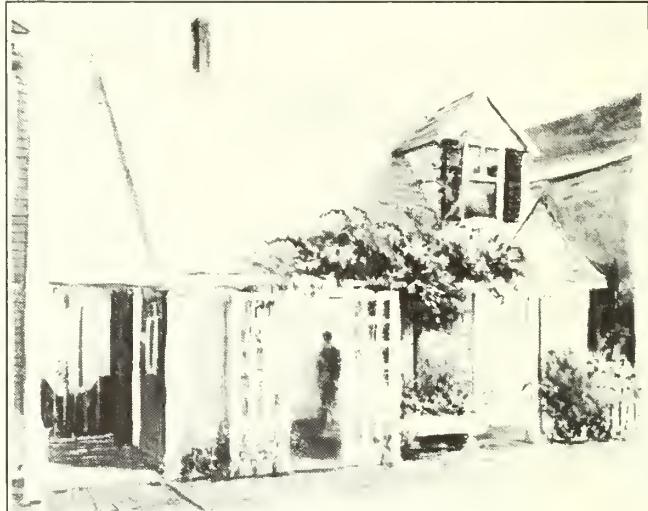
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PROVINCETOWN GALLERY GUILD

P. O. BOX 242

PROVINCETOWN, MA 02657





# A Year for Asian Films

By Joan Lebold Cohen

Everyone knows that the Japanese can make marvelous films . . . but this year's news is the strong showing of films from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam. Reflecting the enormous energy of the Asia-Pacific rim and its emerging sophistication, their films speak to us clearly in an international theatre. They express their unique views of civilization, modernization, love, violence and death.

## A YEAR FOR ASIAN FILMS



SCENE FROM *OLD WELL*



HONG SEN AT WORK

After seeing the very moving *Letters from Vietnam*, my husband, who has seen other fine American films about Vietnam, said that if he ever sees another Vietnam war film, it should be made by a Vietnamese to tell us their side of the war. *The Abandoned Field* is just that. Set in the Mekong Delta during the "American war," it is the story of a Viet Cong guide, his wife and their baby, who live in a house on stilts above the waterway. They lead a sweetly idyllic life in their grass shack, hidden in the marsh foliage, except for the times when they must elude American helicopters. Shot in black and white, with minimal equipment, *The Abandoned Field* has the simplicity of a Zen koan. It is a deeply moving statement about life and war, blaming no one, but showing the futility and danger of the game.

The Vietnamese have been at war with so many people in the last fifty years —the French, Americans, Chinese and Kam-puchea ns that James Fallows, writing in the *Atlantic*, recently said that the "American war" may loom larger in our minds than theirs. Mostly, they seem to yearn for a reconciliation, especially since the showing of *Platoon*, which acknowledges American guilt and dissension about the war. *Platoon* is the only American film to be shown in Vietnam since 1975.

The Vietnamese film industry began in 1953 in the jungle, documenting the fight against French colonial rule. Another film in this series is a documentary *The Battle of Dien Bien Phu* (1954) made in 1964. Using some original footage of this historic battle mixed in with some re-created scenes, it demonstrates how the Vietnamese decisively defeated the superior French forces. Even with the propaganda elements, it is a fascinating and worthwhile film.

In a gesture of recognition and a baby step towards reconciliation, the Hawaii International Film Festival in November 1988 premiered five Vietnamese films. Their New York debut at The Asia Society is in April 1989, after which ten films co-sponsored by the UCLA Film Archive will tour the U.S. for two years.

In 1988, for the first time ever, a

film from the People's Republic of China was featured at the New York Film Festival. *Red Sorghum* was the Festival's closing film, and there was also a Taiwan entry *Daughter of the Nile*. These films demonstrate creativity on both sides of the Taiwan straits. Although some PRC and Taiwan films have been shown in New York in Chinatown, The Asia Society, and at universities and museums, the New York Film Festival's entries mark a rite of passage.

*Red Sorghum* is a dynamic fable told by a grandchild about his fictional grandparents. The film opens in his grandmother's sedan chair where she, an impoverished but beautiful peasant, is being carried to an arranged marriage with a rich leper. Her ordeal, which is artfully depicted, includes stern admonitions of proper behavior, tortuous teasing by the chair carriers, and an attempted robbery and rape before she ever faces her dreaded betrothed. Her escape and love union with the man who becomes the child's grandfather is dramatically set in a ripe sorghum field. The title comes from the type of liquor made from sorghum grain, which is also the family business. Although fast paced and full of earthy humor, *Red Sorghum* does not sustain the extraordinary quality of the opening sequence, yet it is action-packed and visually rich. The narrative tone is presented by a child believer who digested the whole cloth of Chinese Communist folk mythology. At the same time, the director signals the symbolic rather than realistic nature of the events.

*Red Sorghum* has caught the romantic imagination of the public in Europe and England, where it has been widely shown and is a popular success. It is among the first Chinese films to win a prize in the West (the 1988 Berlin Film Festival) and to be commercially distributed.

Zhang Yimou, the talented, young director (39) of *Red Sorghum*, is from the generation who missed their secondary education during the Cultural Revolution. Belatedly, he studied cinematography at the Beijing Film Academy, graduating in 1982, in a class called "the fifth genera-

## A YEAR FOR ASIAN FILMS

tion" of filmmakers. (Chinese count the first generation of film makers from 1902.) Zhang Yimou had been cameraman for his outstanding classmate-director Chen Kaige in *Yellow Earth* and *The Big Parade*, as well as co-cameraman and star in *Old Well*, perhaps the three other best-known recent PRC films.

Zhang Yimou gave a stunning performance as leading actor in *Old Well*, a film about a difficult search for water and love in the parched, red mountains of Western China. As a result, Zhang Yimou's handsomely rugged face has appeared in every Chinese and Western movie magazine this year. Zhang Yimou plays the role of a strong, smart peasant, the only villager with technological training in modern well digging. His father insists that he marry a rich widow instead of his beloved. During the agonizing digging of a well, a cave-in traps the frustrated lovers. They assume this mud hole will be their tomb and a passionate love scene ensues. Since kissing has been hitherto taboo in Chinese films, this comes as quite a surprise. Director Wu Tianming, who is the outspoken, courageous Xi'an Film Studio head, assures me that "there will be many more long kisses" on the Chinese screen.

An exceptional scene in *Old Well* shows the angry confrontation between groups from two villages, both of whom claim ownership of a well that has never had water. Both villages mobilize men, armed with pitch forks and hoes, to enforce their claim. It is classic in its intensity and veracity. The director's deft hand relieves the impossible situation with a comic ploy—by retrieving a stone inscribed with the deed to the well from a villager's latrine.

*Old Well* was featured with other films from China's most creative Xi'an Film studio at Colorado's 1988 Telluride Film Festival. *Old Well* and the others subsequently toured coast to coast, including The Asia Society and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Another outstanding 1988 PRC film is *King of the Children*, directed by Fifth Generation notable, Chen Kaige. *King of the Children* was the first PRC film invited to compete at Cannes

and it was also featured in the 1988 Telluride Film Festival along with other Xi'an films. The story of *King of the Children* is similar to the biography of the director Chen Kaige, a teen-ager sent to a remote southwestern Chinese jungle outpost to do labor and "learn from the peasants." After some years of subsistence farming he is drafted to teach school in a neighboring village, where he comes to confront the educational system. Filled with jungle scenes of singular beauty, it is a poignant film that questions the larger notion of civilization, as well as unsettling the heart of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

*Daughter of the Nile* was the entry from Taiwan in the New York Film Festival. This evocative title is taken from a comic strip read by the star of the film, Yang Lin. She plays a sympathetic and appealing student who works at a Taipei Kentucky Fried Chicken to support herself. Her brother is a thief and leads us on the fast track through parts of Taipei's underworld, and her father is a stony hold-out for old style neo-Confucianism. It is a film crafted in the personal, lyric style of its director, Hou Hsiao-hsien, who looks at the breakdown of the old morality in a society in which money rules.

Hou Hsiao-hsien's autobiographical epic of growing up in rural Taiwan, *A Time to Live, a Time to Die*, was shown at the New York Film Festival several seasons ago. It was a harbinger of the talented new generation of Chinese filmmakers.

In October, 1988, Hong Kong films made a grand entry at an Asia Society festival in their honor and were received by the critics with surprise and praise. Well beyond the kung fu stereotypes, this highly developed industry presented films ranging from romance to comedies and thrillers set both in historical and contemporary life. The Hong Kong film industry has suffered less than others from audience defection to TV and video because Hong Kong theaters provide an escape from intensely inhabited quarters during their very long, hot summer.

A notable example of Hong Kong film is an adaptation from the Qing dynasty stories "Strange Tales from a Chi-

nese Studio"—titled *A Chinese Ghost Story*. It is, in fact, a remake of a Hong Kong film of twenty years ago with the stereotypical handsome, young scholar transformed into a clumsy but lovable traveler, and the gentle, beautiful ghost proving playful and sensuous in a witty, earthy manner. Highly sophisticated special effects provide an uniquely Chinese look at heaven and hell, with Chinese tortures reaching a new hilarious high.

*Prison on Fire* was written by Nam Yin, who tells it from a life experience. The film features the reigning Hong Kong superstar—lanky and handsome Chow Yun-fat. It, like many Hong Kong films, shows the underworld of gangs apparently endemic to the modern urban landscape, including the triads, a Chinese secret society that matches the mafia for violence. These brilliantly fast-paced, action packed films combine Hong Kong's explosive energy with the newest technology and special effects which are the imprimatur of Hong Kong films.

China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong all ride the crest of economic development in the Asia/Pacific rim. Yet, if economic development were the principal fuel for filmmakers, there would be no way to explain Vietnam, even though Communist states like Vietnam provide enough support to keep the industry alive. Although the Vietnamese film industry labors under the most trying conditions, such as outrageously antiquated and limited equipment collected during the five decades of continuous war since 1940, its filmmakers are still able to make world class films.

The fresh air and articulate statements of these Asian films provide an enormously rich addition to the usual American and European cinema diet. □□

*Joan Lebold Cohen is a specialist on Asian film and art.*

# MOVIE COMPANY

## *It's not much fun going to the movies alone . . .*

**By Anne Bernays**

It's not much fun going to the movies alone, although I'm not sure why. It's certainly not as daunting as eating solo in a restaurant. But it seems somehow . . . unhealthy. It's my opinion that the movies have it all over any other form of entertainment—even live theater—but I'd almost rather sit side by side at the local duodecaplex with the dental hygienist known in our family as "The Nazi" than be flanked by strangers.

My need for company at the movies probably started with my mother. I can't remember ever having an extended conversation with her until I was an adult, and even then I told her pretty much what I thought she wanted to hear. My mother was not a matey person. But every so often she left the office where she spent each day writing copy for my father, a practitioner of the P.R. trade, and took me with her to an after-school movie. On these occasions we were companions of the heart. Mostly we went to the swank Plaza Theater on East 58th Street, where we sat in the loge section so she could smoke her Parliaments, cigarettes that came in a hinged box and were filtered by tiny wads of

surgical cotton. As the movie unreeled we were thinking the same things at the same time for as long as it lasted. We were in emotional sync.

I like to think she also used these times to let me know she thought I was okay, that it didn't matter that I was flunking French or wasn't as popular as my sister or cried a lot. We both loved the movies, we both knew what was important, exciting, beautiful. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movies were the first films she introduced me to. Later we saw Errol Flynn as Robin Hood.

We saw Louis Hayward in *The Man in the Iron Mask*, a terrifying drama of sibling revenge, and early Hitchcock pictures, like *Suspicion*, still one of my all-time favorites because the suspense works so well and you don't know until the final scene if Cary Grant is actually trying to kill his wife or if she just thinks he is. My mother was crazy about *Topper* movies with Roland Young as a ghost and domestic comedies with Melvyn Douglas, who delivered lines of genuine wit and grace -- even as a young girl I could recognize that the dialog in these movies was high-quality stuff. I suppose it's sad that I felt intimate with my mother only in the dark and in silence, but there it is; it could have been worse.

For several years my two best friends from school, Moo-face Myers and Donnie Agar, and I would meet every Saturday at the lunch counter in Liggett's Drugstore where we would eat egg salad or tuna sandwiches and chocolate frappes and then set off for Loew's 86th or RKO's 72nd Street and that week's double feature—no matter what was playing. Of course some movies were more exciting than others, like *The Seventh Veil*, an English import starring Ann Todd in the role of a pianist who leaves but eventually goes back to a disgusting bully played by James Mason. We were happy for her; so much for incipient feminism. We saw *Mrs. Miniver* and developed instant crushes on Richard Ney, an astonishingly handsome actor who played Greer Garson's son in the movie and then shocked us by marrying her in real life—this was incest. We went to murder mysteries like *Double Indemnity* with Barbara Stanwyck as a sex-pot and lots of so-called "B" movies, low budget pictures whose stories unfolded briskly and were never boring. We watched in horror as our very own drama teacher, Mildred Dunnock (to us she had always been Mrs. Urmy), playing an old woman in a wheelchair, was pushed down a flight of tenement stairs by Richard Widmark in *Kiss of Death*. Invariably, we agreed about



*Chose your movie company carefully*

the movies we saw, three adolescent kiddoes responding with the same uncritical enthusiasm.

I can't remember a period of my life when I haven't gone to the movies at least once every two weeks. Frequently, during the years I was single and on a refined sort of prowl, I would ask my date to take me to the movies so I could see what kind of taste he had. If he liked slow, narcissistic, foreign films—*Hiroshima Mon Amour* is the most flagrant example of what I mean—red flags went up, sirens went off. The idea of my investing even a tiny part of my psyche in such a man was as unthinkable as falling for someone who preferred the Yankees to the Giants or S. V. Benet to W. H. Auden. No thank you.

Whenever my husband Justin and I go to the movies he buys a container of popcorn (no butter) before we go in and sit down, even if we just finished lunch fifteen minutes earlier. One Saturday afternoon some years back (we'd been married at least fifteen years by then), we drove to a glitzy suburban movie complex to see *The Deer Hunter*, a movie I hated from the moment one of the longest wedding scenes in the history of the cinema began to inch its way across the afternoon. As the scene shifted from a gloomy coal town in Pennsylvania to Vietnam I seem to recall being

simultaneously bored and terrified, although I know this is impossible and can't be true. In any case, as I sat there wishing it were over, I was aware that Justin was stuffing popcorn into his mouth so fast it was spilling onto his lap. And during the jungle scene in which some G.I.s are forced to play Russian Roulette—close-up of revolver at temple, finger on trigger—Justin's hand went from container to mouth and back faster and faster until it was moving as rapidly as his jaws. When the predictable happened—there's no point in having a drawn-out sequence of Russian Roulette without letting one of the players shoot his head off—I freaked (even though I knew it was coming) while Justin went right on feeding himself. What sort of man, I asked myself, eats popcorn while watching another man blow his brains out? Does one

want to live with such a person? Can one? Later, when I confronted him: "How could you possibly do such a thing?" he said, "I was nervous." Different strokes.

Sometimes I take advantage of Justin's good nature and use him in a way I'm ashamed of—but only when we're at a movie whose plot-line is too complicated for my slow-moving brain. Pictures like *Three Days of the Condor*, *Gorki Park*, *The Ipcress File* come to mind, as does anything featuring a double or a triple

agent. Instead of keeping my confusion to myself I bug my husband, munching his popcorn and trying to have a good time: "Why is he hiding that microfilm in the coffee tin?" "Why didn't she tell him she knew all along that he had the plans?" "What's he doing in that bath tub?" until he tells me to kindly stop asking questions and just go with the flow. He doesn't think it's crucial to understand every twist and turn of plot, every motivation, but for some reason I can't seem to enjoy the movie unless I can follow the story. I'm completely hopeless at any movie made from a book by John LeCarre—are all the other people in the audience faking it or can they really find their way out of the labyrinth?

Every Monday night after dinner, when I leave the house to rehearse with the chorus I sing in, Justin marches off to Harvard Square to go to the movies by himself. He loves Monday nights. It's agreed he will try to see something I wouldn't be caught dead at, such as lengthy epic yawns with messages: *Reds*, *Gandhi*, *Cry Freedom*. So-called "realistic" Vietnam flicks like *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*; blood-and-gore extravaganzas (I know my limits) such as anything *Godfather* or *Rambo*, *Taxi Driver*. When we meet up again around ten o'clock and I say "How

## Anne Bernays

was it?" he generally says. "You were right." But he keeps going anyway; it must be a fantastic relief for him not to have to deal with a pest in the dark.

Fortunately, our taste for funny movies coincides. The fact is it's embarrassing to laugh while you're sitting alone in a theater, even if everyone around you is hysterical. Besides, when Justin and I see a comedy together I don't have to give him a moment of uneasiness or trouble. We both love whacko and gamey pictures like *Blazing Saddles*—Yiddish-speaking horse thieves; *The Producers*—imagine, if you can, a genuinely funny SS man; *Animal House*—

pure, exuberant bad taste. I can't understand people who rate a movie only "okay" while admitting they laughed all the way through it. Have they any idea how hard it is to make someone laugh—reader or audience—and how hard it is to keep them laughing? I was sorry when Woody Allen stopped making movies like *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*, for he threw out the can of all-spice and got artsy and self-conscious—and something even worse: bland. Our movie, the one I plan to write with Justin, is going to be the funniest movie ever made. Nobody will take us seriously, of course, for comedy

is ranked several notches lower than anything solemn or "meaningful", no matter how brilliant the comedy or how hackneyed the solemn product. But honestly, who wouldn't (while sharing popcorn or a box of Raisinets and maybe even holding hands) rather watch Gene Wilder caress a sheep wearing a garter belt than some pale woman leaning against a leafless tree, moaning about her lost identity? I think I know which my frosty old mother would have chosen. □□

*Anne Bernays' eighth novel, Professor Romeo, will be published in July by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.*

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## *Two Poems By M. D. Stein*

### **TRURO LOVE**

With the cape socked in  
and salt's infinite bitterness  
on your lips like the ocean,  
there's an excuse for weakness—  
the need to retell over cocktails  
stories of breakdowns and blackmails.  
Somehow it always ends with regret.  
How life was ruined by a poet, decades  
back, who asked you, the newest undergrad,  
'How much should we pay the maid?'  
when he drank the language and things got bad.  
Women were sweets 'not to be spurned,  
not to be lived on.' When it ended  
it was as if you were dead.  
But you remember the words from his mouth,  
old vermouth tricks, his insomniac pout.  
Now it's you with the shakes in your hands and head.

### **TRAWLING**

I wipe my hands and cast the tip  
ten years away, sinking it with sounds  
of my father and school chums

navigating a tail-finned Olds  
to the deep sea boat  
rented for the early hours.  
Morning gullets slosh with beer.

The slop-pails on deck slap  
with flounders three hours out.  
Hooks flash like memories going down,

and sea-legs make everyone drunk.  
Slickers keep the mist at bay  
and we throw only the youngest back.  
When I trawl now, I feel the long days

and slow pull against a line  
I cannot follow to the bottom  
where the deepest past hides.

*M.D. Stein is a physician and writer who lives in Providence with his wife and new son. His recent work appears in The Quarterly, Harvard Magazine, and Southwest Review.*

# “Come On, Kids, Let’s Put On a Show!”

**By Justin Kaplan**

During the early 1980s, the most popular new American quotation was probably Andy Warhol’s “Everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes.” Today’s hot quotation, reliably attributed to Dan Cook, a San Antonio sports writer, appears to be, “The opera ain’t over ‘til the fat lady sings.” Instead of movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn (“Include me out”), it’s now Yogi Berra on whom free-floating, apocryphal bits of inspired dumbness (“It’s *deja vu* all over again”) fasten themselves.

The public opinion survey that arrived at these conclusions makes no claim to being scientific—I’m simply going by my homework and by letters and phone calls received since I took on the job of putting together a new edition of *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*. The people out there don’t seem quite so interested in nailing down floating quotations of a different sort: for example, Flaubert’s “Madame Bovary, c’est moi,” or Chekhov’s advice to dramatists not to introduce a gun in Act One unless someone gets shot in Act Three.

*Bartlett* is the granddaddy (and still world champion) of all the quotation books that supply ideas and raw material to numbed-out speech-writers, preachers, and

editorial page editors. Many other people, though, including writers like me, have been reading *Bartlett* for fun ever since we were old enough to hold a heavy book and our grown-up heads are now stuffed with other people’s worlds. *Bartlett* has been in print, in successively enlarged editions, since the middle of the nineteenth century. Little Brown brought out the most recent edition, the 15th, in 1980. They’ll bring out the new one in 1992.

Editing a book of this sort is giving me so much pleasure—and so much less pain than writing a book—that I feel guilty. But that’s my problem. I’m hoping for a quotation book that is less kind and less gentle than its predecessors; takes a dim view of commencement oratory, self-evident propositions, muzzy sentiment, *ex cathedra* pronouncements, withered flowers of poesy, and in general anything that makes your eyes glaze; aims to be cosmopolitan as well as national in its coverage, mandarin as well as man-in-the-street in its courses; welcomes quotations from popular culture—sports, rock lyrics (today’s street poetry), radio and television, and especially the movies.

The old lingua franca used to be made up of tags from the Bible, Shakespeare, the classics. Along with volumes in The World’s Classics and Everyman’s Library,

*The Oxford Book of English Verse* accompanied the British soldier into World War I. Armed Services Editions accompanied the American soldier into World War II. The equivalents for the Vietnam era were Jimi Hendrix, *Head Comix*, and *Mad*. Today, even for a college audience, it’s almost impossible to make even the simplest Biblical or classical reference—to Jacob wrestling with the angel, for example, or Penelope weaving and unweaving her web—and expect to be understood. But you’re on safe ground with movie quotes.

The so-called decline in “cultural literacy,” the shrinking public of hardcore readers, doesn’t mean that people have stopped using quotations. They haven’t. But the quotations you now hear most frequently tend to come from other than literary sources, and especially the movies. People recognize and respond readily to movie references, and as a form of short-hand, which all references fundamentally are, their normal verbal and symbolizing power is enhanced by indelible visual images; the camera forces us to accept its point of view, the way it edits and frames the world. At the same time, the movies themselves have become what literary critics call “intertextual.” Movies more and more rely on your response to



*"Trust everybody, but cut the cards."*

visual, verbal, and dramatic "quotations" from other movies. Anytime someone showers alone on the screen, you're probably thinking of Alfred Hitchcock's blood bath at the Bates Motel. That was as definitive in its line as Hamlet stalking Claudius.

As the career of Ronald Reagan demonstrates, you don't necessarily have to be a good actor or actress to make a line of dialogue unforgettable. But it helps. Think of Marlon Brando ("I could have been a contender"), Lauren Bacall ("You know how to whistle, don't you Steve? You just put your lips together and blow"), Bette Davis ("Faster your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night"), Claude Rains ("Round up the usual suspects").

George Bush scored a sort of hat trick in 1988 when, in a campaign speech, he declared, "Here I stand, warts and all," and gave full credit to Abraham Lincoln as its source. Bush's quote was zero percent Lincoln, 50 percent Martin Luther, and 50 percent Oliver Cromwell. Dan Quayle has served up garbled recollections of Bobby Knight. "As I often say," Ronald Reagan confided to a national television audience, "Trust everybody, but cut the cards." This sounded good, gave the desired impression of down-to-earth, shirtsleeve shrewdness, but was a clear steal from

Finley Peter Dunne's barroom sage, Mr. Dooley. Nevertheless, the great communicator, although he may not belong in a class with Cicero and Demosthenes, has used quotations and allusions at least as effectively as any public figure in recent history.

During one of their 1980 primary debates, candidate Ronald Reagan sandbagged George Bush with an old movie line, "I paid for this microphone." But when President Reagan drew on silver-screen memories to become Dirty Harry, snarling, "Make my day," or George Gipp on his deathbed telling Knute Rockne how to inspire a team, or a grizzled admiral (played by Frederic March in *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*) asking where he can find other brave men, he got movies hopelessly confused with real life. And in consequence, after having passed eight years with him in a popcorn and jellybean-induced stupor, we may feel the Reagan era was just another movie. Once at least, during Reagan's time in Washington, the movies betrayed him. When the press renamed his Strategic Defensive Initiative "Star Wars," he objected on the grounds that this was serious stuff, not a George Lucas movie. Until then, he'd been having a good time, courtesy of George Lucas, calling the Soviet Union the "evil empire."

*Where's the Rest of Me?*, the ghost written autobiography Reagan published in 1965, just before he was elected governor of California, took its title from a movie scene (in *King's Row*) that he called "the most challenging acting problem of my career." Coming out of the anesthesia after having both his legs amputated, the Reagan character asks Anne Sheridan, "Where's the rest of me?" All in all, given the gruesome circumstances and the fact that this was by and large an unanswerable question, it seems a rather odd choice for a title, but Reagan knew what he was doing. He identified himself with his most famous line up to then. He now describes himself as an "ex-actor" and is working on an as-yet untitled book of memories. Too bad Hollywood got there first with *That's Entertainment*. □□

*Justin Kaplan is the author of Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain, for which he received both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, Lincoln Steffens, A Biography, Mark Twain and His World, and Walt Whitman: A Life, which also received the National Book Award. Essays and reviews by Mr. Kaplan have appeared in The New York Times, New Republic, and similar publications.*

# CONVERSATION WITH LEE FALK

*While still an undergraduate in the Midwest, Lee Falk invented Mandrake the Magician, the first black and white crime-fighting team. He created The Phantom, the first superhero in tights, within two years of graduation. Falk's other consuming passion was theater, which he indulged by owning and operating several playhouses, where he often filled the roles of producer and /or director.*

**Raymond Elman:** You've written several plays, owned a number of theaters, and produced many significant theater pieces. Was your theater life a whole separate existence from your comic strip world?

**Lee Falk:** My ambition when I was a young man was to be a playwright. I wrote plays and acted while I was in college, though I was never comfortable on the stage. When I went to New York to try and sell *Mandrake*, I also brought a satire about capital and labor, called the *Catatonics*, and some short stories I'd written. I thought whatever sells, that's what I'll do. Clifford Odets, who was about 30 at the time, had a hit play on Broadway, and I secretly said to myself that I would have a hit play on Broadway by the time I was 30—it almost came true.

I submitted my short stories to an agent,

a rather ungracious young man, who talked like he had mashed potatoes in his mouth—very Eastern Establishment. He said, "These little midwest kind of stories are very boring. I don't think you should try to write." About five years later I was sailing back from Europe on the *Isle de France*. By that time I had two strips going, I had started a theater, I had a beautiful young wife, and for a young man I was very successful. The jerk who had turned down my "little midwest stories" was on the boat. He said, "I'm writing some stories, I wish you'd tell me what you think about them." I read them. They were terrible—I mean awful.

**RE:** Just a few years after coming to New York, you started a summer theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Why Cambridge?

**LF:** John Huntington, who eventually

became my partner, was a Harvard graduate, and he knew about a theater in Cambridge—the Brattle Theater. A little group called The Straw Hat Theater played there, run by Catherine Huntington, who dropped the Straw Hat group to run the Provincetown Theater Company. Oddly enough, these two Huntingtons weren't related. His real name was Duryea Huntington Jones. He changed his name because the boys at Harvard used to call him "Diarrhea." My first wife, Louise, also started acting in Cambridge, and that's how I got involved in the whole Boston area.

Another theater partner was a fellow named Russell Mahoney. He was one of the young editors of *The New Yorker*, and a wonderful short story writer. He died very young, but his stories still appear in anthologies.

We started out as professional theater,



Lee Falk with Barbara Britton, 1954

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and in two weeks we were flat broke. So I said, "Let's close this silly play, I'd like to do *The Front Page*." This was in 1940. We had an actor named James Rennee, who was a well-known Broadway star. He said, "You know, I've always wanted to play Walter Burns." So we very quickly set up and did it, and it turned out to be a sensation. By pure chance *The Front Page* had never played Boston because the closing line is: "The son-of-a-bitch stole my watch." The Boston censors had said, "You can't say 'son-of-a-bitch.'" And Ben Hecht said, "Well, then we won't play Boston." Another stroke of good fortune was that the model for Walter Burns had become the publisher of the *Boston American*. So we got so much publicity that we became a big hit. That launched us.

**RE:** You owned other theaters as well?  
**LF:** Yes. During the war years I was in Washington, and Johnny ran the Brattle Theater. When I returned after the war, we continued running in Cambridge, and started doing productions in the New England Mutual Hall in Boston as well. Then we gave up Cambridge because it only had 400 seats, while Mutual Hall had 1200 seats. I was directing most of the shows, running back and forth between Cambridge and Boston. But then Cambridge couldn't carry its weight because the productions became too expensive. So we acquired another theater in Framingham—a 2500 seat theater at Shoppers' World—which was the biggest summer theater in America. Marlon Brando, Billy Burke, Ezio Pinza, the biggest stars played there.

**RE:** Since you were so active in Boston, why did you continue to live in New York?  
**LF:** I really didn't like New England in the winter. I used to go to the islands in the winter—we opened a winter theater in Nassau. But I liked Boston in the summer—New York certainly wasn't attractive in the summer.

**RE:** Did you also have your house in Truro then?  
**LF:** No, I didn't buy the Truro house until 1960. So for years I lived in Boston hotels—just like Mandrake.

**RE:** So far you've mentioned theaters in

Cambridge, Boston, Framingham and Nassau.

**LF:** I had one in Marblehead too.

**RE:** Was there ever a time when all of the theaters were running simultaneously?

**LF:** No. There were always two going in the summer. Boston is the one that always ran—that was very successful. In fact, at times, it was the only professional theater in Boston in the summer.

We had to have big theaters because we were using big name stars who demanded big salaries. After a while I became bored with this type of theater. During those years I produced around 300 plays, and directed about 100 of them. My first season in Boston I directed 18 plays in a row, and did the comic strips at the same time. I also wrote plays—I can't imagine how I did all of that.

**RE:** It's my understanding that you produced the first *Othello* with a black man in the title role—in this case, Paul Robeson.

**LF:** As far as I know it was the first, certainly in modern times. That production was done in Cambridge—it was fantastic.

We had Margaret Webster as the director, who was the first important female director and one of the top Shakespeare directors in the United States—she was the daughter of Dame May Whittey. The Theater Guild was a little afraid of the idea of a black man in the title role. But we had Uta Hagan as Desdemona, and Jose Ferrar as Iago, everybody was very young, and we decided to try it out anyway in Cambridge and Princeton.

*Life* magazine sent out a photographer to document our production. We got four double-page-spreads in *Life* of scenes from the play. Robeson was not really a political figure then; he was the top black personality in America as a concert artist.

Peggy Webster had recently done *Othello* in New York with Walter Huston, and she was able to get all of the beautiful costumes from the New York production—all those deep reds. It was a stunning production. The critics in Boston talked about our production for years after.

**RE:** It's interesting to me that you deny that any of your work is politically moti-

vated, yet many of your most noteworthy endeavors involve blacks in significant roles—Lothar in *Mandrake*, the Phantom's most trustworthy allies are a band of Pygmies, and the first *Othello* with a black in the title role. What kind of mail did the *Othello* production generate?

**LF:** There was more than mail. The *Life* magazine spread included a picture of Robeson and Uta Hagan kissing. And the story about a little theater in Cambridge gave the impression that the production was somehow connected to Harvard. We were furious because we didn't want Harvard getting credit for our production, and Johnny wanted to sue Henry Luce. I said, "Johnny, you can't sue Henry Luce, I'll write a note to *Life*'s editor." So I wrote a letter saying that Harvard had done many wonderful things during its 300 year history, but one of things it didn't do was the Margaret Webster production of *Othello*—"we dood it"—which was an expression at the time. *Life* ran my letter, but they also ran other letters saying, "What's America coming to when *Life* runs a picture of a black man kissing a white woman!" Some people were furious.

**RE:** In 1950s America, that doesn't surprise me at all.

**LF:** At the bottom of this column, after all of the hostile letters, was my letter saying, "We dood it."

Although I grew up in St. Louis in a segregated world, I was still surprised by all of the hostility. I had been around the theater and jazz musicians for so long that I had lost my sensitivity to racial differences.

**RE:** Another controversial figure you worked with was Marlon Brando—what was your experience with "The Wild One."

**LF:** He played in our production of Shaw's *The Arms of a Man*. It was after *A Streetcar Named Desire*. He was a big star. Which turned out to be a big problem in our production. Brando was playing his part in a highly stylized manner, while his fellow actors were being very low key. They hated him for the contrast. I thought he was a great actor, while the others were not so good.

**RE:** Brando has a reputation of being

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difficult and not always nice—did you have any problems?

**LF:** I found him hard to know—we didn't become close. We would all go out to eat afterwards, and he would sit at the table reading a book. He wanted to look like a muscleman, so he was always dieting. He would never order anything at the restaurant. Instead he would pick up a spoon and eat from everyone else's plate. But I didn't have any bad experiences. I just thought of him as a great actor.

**RE:** Who were some of the other memorable actors that you worked with?

**LF:** I liked James Mason very much. Charlton Heston, who had just made *The Ten Commandments*, came down to Nassau with me, and I found him to be a likable bright guy. I didn't know what his politics were then. I remember Heston telling a classic actor career story. He was ready to quit the New York theater, and had taken a job at a little radio station in North Carolina, thinking that he would do something like that for the rest of his life. He returned to New York to close his apartment and pick up his belongings. A friend told him that someone was looking for him to play a role in one of television's early dramatic productions. He took the television part, and it changed his career. He was the first major actor to go from television to the movies.

I found him brilliant. We did a nice little comedy, *Bell, Book and Candle*. I had a little tiny stage in Nassau, a two-sided arena theater with about 40 seats. We always had to pay a lot of attention to blocking out a play for this theater. In stock theater you move very fast. We only had nine run-throughs from the time the actors first looked at the script to the time they acted before an audience. So the first couple of days we would always spend a lot of time blocking out the stage movements and writing them on the script. I noticed that Heston wasn't writing anything down, though he must have had hundreds of

moves. Of course, everything must be choreographed on a stage, otherwise it will be complete chaos. So I said, "Chuck, you've got to write down your movements." He said, "No, it's all right." I couldn't argue with him. He was a big guy, not to mention my star. We went through two days of blocking and he didn't write down a thing. We took the next day off, and when we started the following day I was thinking that we were going to have to re-block the whole damn thing, which is very tedious. Well, he got up on the stage and did everything perfect. I couldn't believe it. I worked with hundreds of actors and I never saw anything like that.

Milt Cannif started *Terry & the Pirates*, and the Hearst papers came out with a Saturday tabloid section of comics.

**RE:** You think of yourself as a writer, not a visual artist, yet you chose a visual medium for a profession.

**LF:** I did study some art. I drew the original versions of *Mandrake*. I drew a two week's sample, I have enlargements of the originals in my Truro house. I wasn't too interested in drawing, but I didn't draw badly. Frankly, Ray, I just started this as a kick. I had no idea they'd buy it. I was completely out of this field. I was living in Missouri and had no idea who even did this kind of thing. There were very few strips

in the '30s. I did meet a man named Tuthill, who had a very successful strip called the *Bungle Family*. A friend of mine worked on the strip as an assistant, and I went to him to find out where I might be able to sell my idea for *Mandrake*. I knew that Tuthill had made quite a bit of money out of his strip. When my friend introduced me to Tuthill, who was an eccentric fellow, the cartoonist said, "Well you go to the syndicate and they'll give you 50 cents, and once you get 50 cents"—he talked like that. I think he was trying to discourage me. But sitting out in front of his big home were a lot of expensive big cars, and I figured you get more than 50 cents out of it.

He finally told me to look up the syndicate addresses in the "red book," which I did, and I sent about 10 letters to New York saying that I had a comic strip idea. Only one syndicate responded, King Features Syndicate, the biggest. They sent back a form letter signed by J.B. Connolly, who was the president, saying either send us your idea or come and see us when you are in New York. It turned out Connolly was the righthand man of William Randolph Hearst. He was head of the whole Hearst communications empire.

So I drove out East with my father during my spring vacation. He was on a

*"I was in  
the room at  
the time that  
Mandrake the  
Magician was  
created. There  
was a mirror and  
there was me. I  
was nineteen with  
a mustache."*

**RE:** What other adventure strips appeared in the papers at the time you created *Mandrake the Magician*?

**LF:** Not too many. *Mandrake* appeared at the beginning of a new cycle in comics, which they now refer to as a golden age. I think that the only adventure strip that preceded *Mandrake* was *Tarzan*, which of course was adapted from the novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Maybe *Buck Rogers* started a year or two before me. But the year I started, *Flash Gordon* started,

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buying trip. I brought my strip and called up Mr. Connolly, but was told that he was very busy. I said, "I came all the way from St. Louis, and Mr. Connolly said that I should come see him when I was in New York." There was quiet on the other end of the phone, then she said, "You better come right over, because Mr. Connolly is leaving in a couple of hours." It turned out that he was going to San Simeon to see Hearst. I rushed over there. I didn't stop to shave. I was ushered into his office, and I remember that he had the aura of a great man. He was a tall handsome Irishman, with prematurely white hair, walking up and down swinging a gold-handled cane and dictating to two or three secretaries in his huge office.

There was no art on the walls, except for one enormous drawing of Krazy Kat. I must say I was very impressed by this.

He said, "What have you got there?" I showed it to him. I was not a very good artist, but my idea was original. That's what happens sometimes when someone from outside of a field comes into the field. He said, "I'll show this to the Chief and let you know." I didn't know who the Chief was. It turns out that in those days William Randolph Hearst

picked all of the comic strips himself. Comic strips were his special baby. He really created the field of comic strip in this country back at the turn-of-the-century. In the first years that I was with King Features, I would get little notes from Hearst in San Simeon, telling me what he

liked and didn't like. Here he had this huge empire, but he was sending me notes about comic strips.

King Features also asked me to develop a Sunday page, which I wasn't prepared to do. So I went to Phil Davis, an acquaintance about 15 years older than I was, and a commercial artist who did covers for magazines like *Colliers*. I asked him if he would help me on *Mandrake* while I was still in school. So we worked together. Although he was a much better artist than I was, he wasn't so good at comic art—the dry brush technique. It took him a while to get the hang of it, but he finally became one of the best at using pen and dry brush.

**LF:** Yes. Lothar, Mandrake's side-kick, was the first black in comic strips taken seriously. At first he was an African prince who spoke in "pigeon" English. In a way he was Mandrake's body guard. What I had in mind was that Mandrake the mental giant and Lothar the physical giant would make a great team. As the years progressed Lothar began to speak proper English, and he moved from the body guard's room to the guest room. This was the first black and white crime-fighting team in any media. Of course, today it's commonplace.

**RE:** Maybe it's become commonplace in the past twenty years, but Lothar was introduced decades before the Civil Rights

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN. JUNE 15, 1934



Lee and Elizabeth Falk with a replica of the first *Mandrake* panel

Two years after I started *Mandrake*, the same thing happened with *The Phantom*. I drew the original ideas, and Ray Moore, who worked for Phil Davis, eventually took over the art work.

**RE:** Did Mandrake start out with a black side-kick?

Movement gained national prominence. Did King Features receive a lot of hate mail because of Lothar?

**LF:** Not really, because Lothar was not an American, he was an African prince.

**RE:** Did you think about Lothar from a political perspective?

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**LF:** No, I really didn't see it in political terms. I just liked the idea of a black giant for a body guard and friend to Mandrake.

**RE:** Mandrake always looked like a rakish, debonair, young Lee Falk. I assume that was intentional.

**LF:** I was in the room at the time that Mandrake was created, I was the only model available. There was a mirror and there was me. I was nineteen with a mustache.

**RE:** Do you consider *Mandrake* to be autobiographical?

**LF:** Not really.

**RE:** My understanding is that when you become interested in a particular subject, the subject ultimately works its way into the strip.

**LF:** That's true about both strips. During the war years, for example, they were both involved in what was known as the war effort. The Phantom was in the jungle fighting Japanese invaders and Mandrake went on missions against the Nazis. In general though, I never bring politics into the strips. I always felt that politics belong on the editorial page or the front page. Only a few people like Al Capp and Gary Trudeau have ever successfully married comics and politics.

**RE:** I was referring to non-political subjects. For example, I remember some outer-space adventures that appeared in your strips shortly after you installed a telescope on the roof-deck of your Truro house.

**LF:** Again, not really. I've always been interested in science fiction. At that time science fiction appeared in a magazine called *Amazing Stories*, and science fiction was a small cult. I put science fiction into *Mandrake* almost from the start. Science fiction wasn't very popular then, but *Mandrake* took off anyway. Within a few years *Mandrake* was all over the world. It was the number one adventure strip. Then *The Phantom* came along and knocked *Mandrake* out of the top spot.

**RE:** Was the Phantom the first costumed super hero?

**LF:** Yes, he was the very first. There was nothing like him. I've often been asked where I got the idea for a masked man

wearing tights running through the jungle. It doesn't seem very appropriate, does it? Tarzan is better dressed for a hot jungle.

A very prominent critic in Paris, who teaches comics at the Sorbonne, wrote that the Phantom wore the costume of a medieval executioner. Which it was. However, I never thought of the Phantom as a medieval executioner. I thought of him as a good guy.

**RE:** How do you feel about people seeing things in your characters that are so different from your intentions?

**LF:** I find it very interesting. I've often been asked where the idea for the Phantom

came from, because the Phantom spawned a whole world of super heroes, some of them quite ridiculous. However, Superman, who came after the Phantom, was wonderful. I wish I had thought of him.

**RE:** Batman looks a lot like the Phantom.

**LF:** Batman is almost a copy. The Phantom had his Skull cave, Batman has a Batcave, and so forth. It was an imitation that was very successful.

There are only two comic creations that I really admire in terms of originality. One is *Superman*. The other is *The Hulk*, which I think is a great idea—*Jekyll and*

(continued on page 171)

### The Phantom held hostage in Philadelphia, 1987



# *Going to Extremes: Poets in Provincetown*

By Alison Deming

Of all the views I love in Provincetown, none holds its place in my imagination more serenely than the crest on Route 6 from which a returning traveler gets the first glimpse of town. The land makes its last graceful gesture, winding down into the Atlantic. The town rests in the curvature, gray shingled houses clustered like nestlings. It is, of course, an illusion. No place of human habitation is secure, innocent or uncomplicated. Provincetown's fishing fleet is endangered by overfishing of its waters. The drinking water is scarce and of questionable quality. The town has no more room for its garbage. Its historic status as an art colony is continually challenged by commercialism—when the prices go up, the artists and writers move out. And young men are dying from a virus which wears a disguise of long-stemmed sugars that get through the body's usually masterful defenses. Still, there is the view: a spiral of sand, the dazzling bay, a granite watchtower, and the huddle of skylit homes.

I've argued with a poet friend about beauty. He swears we no longer experience it and that our poetry is an answer to that bleakness. But when he lived in Berkeley, he'd regularly escape the street-crazies and the smog by driving north to Point Reyes—California's natural analogue to Cape Cod. He'd never write about natural beauty though. He was convinced that our language was so tainted by history and advertising that a poem could no longer pretend to represent anything but itself. I think it's that very abrasion between what we experience as beauty and what the culture tries to sell us that makes us want to write, makes us

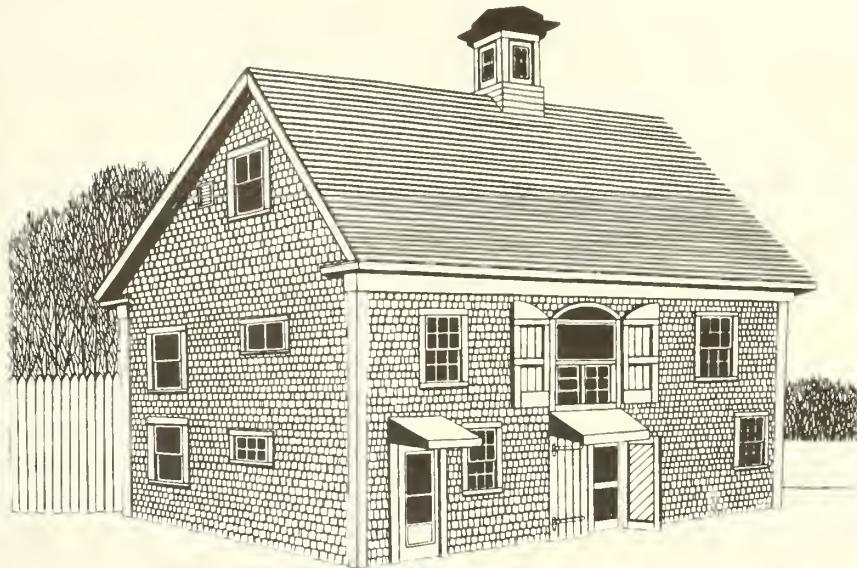
fierce to demonstrate our passion for the truth.

If the spirit of a place has anything to do with what a poet makes, it must be the intensity of light (two f-stops brighter than New York, according to a local naturalist) and the extremity of the geography which so infuse the mind here and make it more reflective. With all that jazzed-up light, the excitement of molecules, even the ordinary air says, Notice me. It makes the place artful for anyone who believes John Cage's maxim that the function of art is "to wake us up to the very life we're living."

Three cures for writer's block: walk the length of Commercial Street at 10 o'clock on a clear February night and see who begins to inhabit your thoughts; look out any bayside window at dawn and name the pattern the wind makes on the water that day; drive to Herring Cove at sunset and study the highway of fishskin gold that leads to the west. Study it until it's gone. Then study the fishing boats working into the dark.

It's hard to work here and not feel the place is inhabited by literary predecessors, beginning with Thoreau who got it right when he called the Cape "the bared and bended arm of Massachusetts: the shoulder at Buzzard's Bay; the elbow, or crazy-bone, at Cape Mallebarre; the wrist at Truro; and the sandy fist at Provincetown." Then Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, and John Reed in the days of the Provincetown Players; and later, John Dos Passos, Tennessee Williams. And now, Stanley Kunitz, Mary Oliver, Alan Dugan, Olga Broumas, Roger Skillings, and others. Their words turn in the mind like brilliant kites. It helps to have them as neighbors—to know the work one respects, work that guides one, was made by people who, like the rest of us, go to the post office, work in the garden, and slip on the ice.

And there are the days—the weeks, sometimes the tangled



## THE FINE ARTS WORK CENTER

months—when no work comes. Or when the work yields nothing, the page full of ink, blank as the shipless ocean. Even then, the place has the right answer, pulling the gaze outward—yes, there is blankness.

For the 10 writers who come to town each fall for seven-month fellowships at the Fine Arts Work Center, it is often the quality of time rather than place that predominates. It may be the first, and, sadly, the only such span of uninterrupted time they will have. It comes at a time when they need it—most often after advanced study of writing but before the publication of a first book. It's a year in which time becomes elastic—the first days with no responsibility other than to the page (or to the daydream of the page), longer than any day imaginable. No one is looking over your shoulder or waiting for a quota or assignment. Yet there is the responsibility of having been chosen. So you work. By springtime, the days may have grown actually longer, but worktime is melting away. The struggle intensifies to find a form that can hold still the slippage of experience through the mind. The Fellows are scrambling for the next slapdash way of living that will let them keep working. And, as one told me, wondering, "Did I ever really live here?"

I like to think every writer who spends time working in a place adds some element to the atmosphere which makes it richer, or creates a geomagnetic anomaly that makes it easier for another writer to sit still, look at things, to reflect and figure out how to get it right. Not that good work can't be done hiking through the rain forests of Borneo or driving a tractor in Indiana. It simply helps, as in any act of dissent, to know you're not alone.

And writing poetry is an act of dissent in at least three ways: economically, because a poet labors to make a thing which will

never be worth money; temporally, because the poem is an argument with the passage of time; and politically, because in an age that looks for truth in aggregate data, the poem insists on the passionate importance of the individual.

The poems I've chosen here reflect several of my biases. First, all of the writers have been associated with the Fine Arts Work Center. I hope whatever insularity that suggests is counterbalanced by the sense of celebration that such a place exists. My second bias is for poems which surprise me either by the boldness of the project (as Jason Shinder's "The Notebooks of Salvador Dali"), the complications of emotion that get named (as in Belle Waring's "Aftertaste"), the juxtaposition of world views (as in Robert Lunday's "An Interview with Amos Tutuola"), or by the sheer evidence of an active intelligence (preferably quirky and individualistic) making some sense of things. I also appreciate the architectural properties of these poems—both their shapes and the elements that built them.

Octavio Paz has written that "faith in the power of words is a reminiscence of our most ancient beliefs: nature is animate; each object has a life of its own; words, which are the doubles of the objective world, are also animate." A poem takes that faith to an extreme. I hope these poems, in their careful and reckless use of language, demonstrate that belief.

*Alison Deming is Writing Coordinator at the Fine Arts Work Center. She first came to Provincetown as a Fellow in 1984-85, and was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford in 1987-88. Her poems have appeared widely in journals, including Black Warrior Review, Tendril, Nimrod, Denver Quarterly, and Michigan Quarterly.*

## OLD GOLD

By W. S. Di Piero

Maytime pepperplants and geraniums  
on scabby balconies. Socks and panties  
clocking the breeze. Everthing's open.  
A hurt peal breaks from a T.V.  
and sails down curbside . . .

Then Indian summer: love's betrayal,  
earnest, off-key, choking from one  
high window. Someone else's trouble,  
another season. I go walking  
to want just that, at all hours, faulted

and shaky in the narrow streets  
of my foreign city. It's no way home.  
Once I heard a nest, up there,  
crackle with five voices at once  
and catch fire.

The streets tonight are empty,  
windows shut against snow  
no one expected. It falls  
like a blessing we can breathe,  
as if it were what heaven lost.

My foot ploughs the new form,  
skids on the flagstone ground  
just enough to pitch me  
toward the place I sense  
I'd need to fall, to be safe.

A car hums past,  
driver and his girl smoldering  
in the dash lights. A streetsweeper  
scythes her broom across the snow,  
snagging wrappers and dog turds.

The gypsy rosebud girl  
always pauses inside the tavern door,  
to catch secrets or guess  
who won't buy. We pause, too,  
looking up from our food.

The African with her tonight  
whooped for *the big boss, the boss man*,  
stomping, rattling his velvet field  
of watches, keychains, gold leaf  
Eiffel Tower lighters.

A waiter grabbed his elbow  
and smiled him back outside.  
He's the one I've seen,  
or think I saw, moments ago  
lashed by headlights. They flayed

a reckless smile from his trapped,  
servile fearlessness  
where he squatted and picked the sun's  
shattered goods, barrettes, moneyclips,  
half-sunken in the snow.

*W. S. Di Piero is the author of three volumes of poetry, with a new volume, The Dog Star, forthcoming from the University of Massachusetts Press. He has also published books of translations of poetry by Leonardo Sinigalli and Sandro Penna. A book of essays, Memory and Enthusiasm, has recently been published by Princeton University Press. He teaches at Stanford University and was a visitor at the Fine Arts Work Center in 1988.*

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## POETRY

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### ***BEDLAM DANNY TALKS TO THE INFIDEELS***

*By J. C. Ellefson*

All night you walk the floor  
stepping only on the squares,  
then the lines—a game  
someone taught you. Who?  
You've forgotten  
everything except your nocturnal  
pacing in your rectangular  
jail. The attendant tries  
ushering you to bed,  
but you corner her, showing  
your teeth. She nearly screams  
before you say it once, but that's  
enough for a mute. "I'm sad."

Your pacing resumes in right  
angled orbit  
until the lights go on—  
until the crew is showered,  
powdered, and dressed, until  
I make my entrance, well-pressed,  
cock-sure and sharp. I breeze  
through the metal doors  
into your pile  
of bricks, tapping out something  
Bee-Bop with my clipboard  
and pen. I find you  
hanging at the usual roost, our  
wooden Indian in the corner  
rocking on his heels. But we're

trained to talk to dummies. I  
profess it continually myself,  
so in Beau Geste for the attending  
staff, I broach you an inch  
from your nose, hold your melon  
head in my hands and ask, "Well how  
the hell's it hanging today, Danny?"  
And you come back with pianissimo  
solemnity—your final encore  
for fellow players and captive  
audience alike. "Well today," you say,  
"I'm sad."

*J. C. Ellefson, also a Fellow this past year, comes most recently from Vermont where he worked as a blacksmith, mental health counselor, and logger. His poems have appeared in The Contemporary Review, Rhino, Crab Creek, and Pivot.*

## ***AN INTERVIEW WITH AMOS TUTUOLA***

*By Robert Lunday*

"The Yoruba have a belief: that we have two minds. One is good, and one is bad. For us, the mind is in the stomach, here. You see, when you are frightened, where do you feel it? You feel it here, in the stomach—right? So the mind is there."

In the Holiday Inn, southeast Houston,  
The Nigerian fabulist rolls up  
The cuffs of his pants, clear to the knee,  
And squats over the microphone  
As if it's a campfire, and my questions  
Fit to be roasted. I ask about  
Point of view, naive quest romance  
As a pertinent form of writing  
In modern African society,  
And is he perhaps familiar with  
The work of Joseph Campbell? etcetera.  
He noses his way through my inquiries  
As if they were so much foliage.  
He's more interested in telling stories,  
Which is only natural, since he is  
An author. Now and then he touches me  
In exclamation, gesturing  
Eloquently in the body's  
Language. And now and then he tries  
To answer a question, to examine

The serrated edge of a leaf:  
Polite curiosity. My research  
Says that he is half-educated,  
That he half-believes the lurid visions  
In his books, borrowed from folklore  
And woven together, spiked here and there  
With a sense of the world electrified,  
Cogged, blanched, gunpowdered, umbrellaed,  
And otherwise Europeanized;  
Composed in a mutant English—not  
Pidgin, or the Queen's English,  
But his own inimitable  
Speech from behind the eyes.  
After the interview has ended  
I put on a cassette of music  
For tape-loop and electric guitar  
Played with beads, cello bow, copper bracelet  
And human bone—a work inspired,  
Says my friend the composer,  
By the work of him who now submits  
To it; and after it has run its course,  
He says, sincerely, holding my hand,  
That, yes! Indeed, he has heard these sounds  
Before, in the forest of ghosts. Then he  
Rattles off some names of spirits  
To see if I recognize any,  
Which I do not; as if the ghosts  
Of one forest could shadow another.

*Robert Lunday was a second-year Fellow this past year. He has also been writer-in-residence at the St. Alban's School in Washington, D.C., and his poems have been published in Montana Review, New England Review, Prairie Schooner, Southern Poetry Review, Southern Humanities Review, and elsewhere.*

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# POETRY

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## TOUCHED

*By Olga Broumas*

Cold  
December nights I'd go  
and lie down in the shallows  
and breathe the brackish tide till light

broke me from dream. Days I kept busy  
with fractured angels' client masquerades.  
One had a tumor  
recently removed, the scar

a zipper down his skull, his neck  
a corset laced with suture.  
I held, and did my tricks, two  
palms, ten fingers, each a mouth

suctioning off the untold harm  
parsed with the body's violent grief  
at being cut. Later a woman  
whose teenage children passed on in a crash

let me massage her deathmask  
belly till the stretch  
marks gleamed again, pearls  
on a blushing rise. A nurse of women HIV

positives in the City  
came, her strong young body filled  
my hands. Fear grips her only  
late at night, at home, her job

a risk on T.V. It was calm, my palm  
on her belly and her heart  
said Breathe. I did. Her smile  
could feed. Nights I'd go down

again and lie down on the gritty  
shale and breathe the earth's salt  
tears till the sun  
stole me from sleep and when you

died I didn't  
weep nor dream but knew you  
like a god breathe in  
each healing we begin.

*Olga Broumas, a member of the Fine Arts Work Center Writing Committee, is a poet, translator, and massage therapist in Provincetown. Her sixth collection of poems, *Perpetua*, is due out this fall from Copper Canyon Press.*

# POETRY

## AFTERTASTE

*By Belle Waring*

"It's the combat zone," the cop said, a Portuguese fine-doll, mixed-up fine, black cheeks sleek as an aubergine. I am letting you know what you missed. "South Station's two miles," he warned me. "Cab's reasonable. Why walk?"

Because reasonable was too high. Like you, I was limping home with a prepaid ticket and change for the paper. "Globe!" the newsboy wore an armcast grubby with ink. I gave him an extra quarter. You missed dodging the shark-faced men who'd cut just to smell the blood. If you'd come with me I wouldn't be moving

unescorted through these pisshole streets, eyes front, with the faith of a firewalker, while the powerglide car radios bunched up throaty with pick-up songs.

South Station smelled like stranded worry, gun metal. Soon the train was racing me down the coast like a rock-and-roll hit, but instead of you, who's next to me is a college girl leaving home. When the train rattled me down to dream your face floated out of the dark and the thrum of you jazzed me up like a champagne rush.

In the evenings to come, as you leave work, I wish you'd turn and catch in the sky a backlit color like roses splashed high in a French cathedral wall. There will be grace, at least, in that.

When we sat by the fountain on our last night, the talk gave itself up to the tremble between the breasts, the quiet said, Now we are feeling the same thought. I thought maybe our shoulders would graze.

*Belle Waring, a Fellow in 1988-89, is from Washington, D.C. Her poems have been published in The George Mason Review and Poetry Miscellany, and work is forthcoming in American Poetry Review.*

## THE NOTEBOOKS OF SALVADOR DALI

*By Jason Shinder*

### I

I pushed a beautiful, curly-headed, little blond playmate off into space as I was helping him along on the tricycle. Going over a bridge that had no railing, and having made sure no one could see us, I shoved him off a bridge of several meters, down on the rocks below. Pretending to be heart-broken, I ran home to get help. He was bleeding profusely. The whole house was in an uproar. I sat in my little rocking chair, rocking back and forth, snacking on grapes and watching the feverish commotion of the parents, enjoying the peaceful darkness in my corner of the sitting room.

### II

I love to crack the skulls of little birds between my teeth, bones that I can suck the marrow of. I regret only that I haven't gotten to eat a famous turkey, cooked alive.

### III

I want to make a book of color illustrations that would make it impossible for men to go to bed with women. I want to sign a contract to put up with pain forever. I want to melt the heavy oak grandfather's clock in the sitting room, and hang it up in the closet.

### IV

I got down on all fours and swung my head left and right until it was gorged with blood and I became dizzy. With my eyes wide open, I could see a world that was solid black, suddenly spotted by bright circles that gradually turned eggs fried sunnyside down.

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## V

I was walking with my mother and sister in the snow, which I was experiencing for the first time. I floated on a magic carpet that crackled lightly under my steps. Soon I was floating in a forest, and suddenly I stopped: in the middle of a clearing, something was there in the snow, waiting for me. It was a plain tree pod, slightly split so as to reveal the fuzz inside. A single ray of sun, sneaking through the clouds, hit the yellowish fuzz like a tiny projector and brought it to life. I rushed toward it, kneeled down and, with all the care one could take, picked it up, a wounded bird, and cupped it to my hands. I brought my lips near it and kissed it. I took my handkerchief and wrapped it up. I told my sister and mother that I found a dwarf monkey, and my only desire was to show it to the girl waiting for me by the fountain.

## VI

I saw huge phosphorescent eggs like the cold expressionless eye of a gigantic animal with slightly bluish white eyeballs.

## VII

I took off my trousers and poured a sack of kernels on myself, to form a big pile on my belly and thighs. I wallowed in the enjoyment of the corn, heated by the burning sun, the prickling of the kernels against my skin.

## VIII

I was dining with Lauri. At the end of the table were champagne bottles, and rare and precious bottles of wine. I was at the end, gazing at them. Lauri was in an armchair, reading the newspaper. Suddenly, the maid, going through the room, exited with a loud slamming of the door. One of the bottles was shaken and began to roll past me from the other end of the table. It fell on the floor with a great noise, a wonderous ejaculation. Lauri looked up from reading the newspaper, stared at me. Meanwhile another bottle, and another, and another, under the same impetus, started to roll.

## IX

This evening I went into the garden and bit just once into each of the vegetables and fruits: onion, beet, melon, plum. I felt a little of their juices run into my mouth, through the wound made by my teeth, and even gnawed on the plum like a vampire drawing his strength.

## X

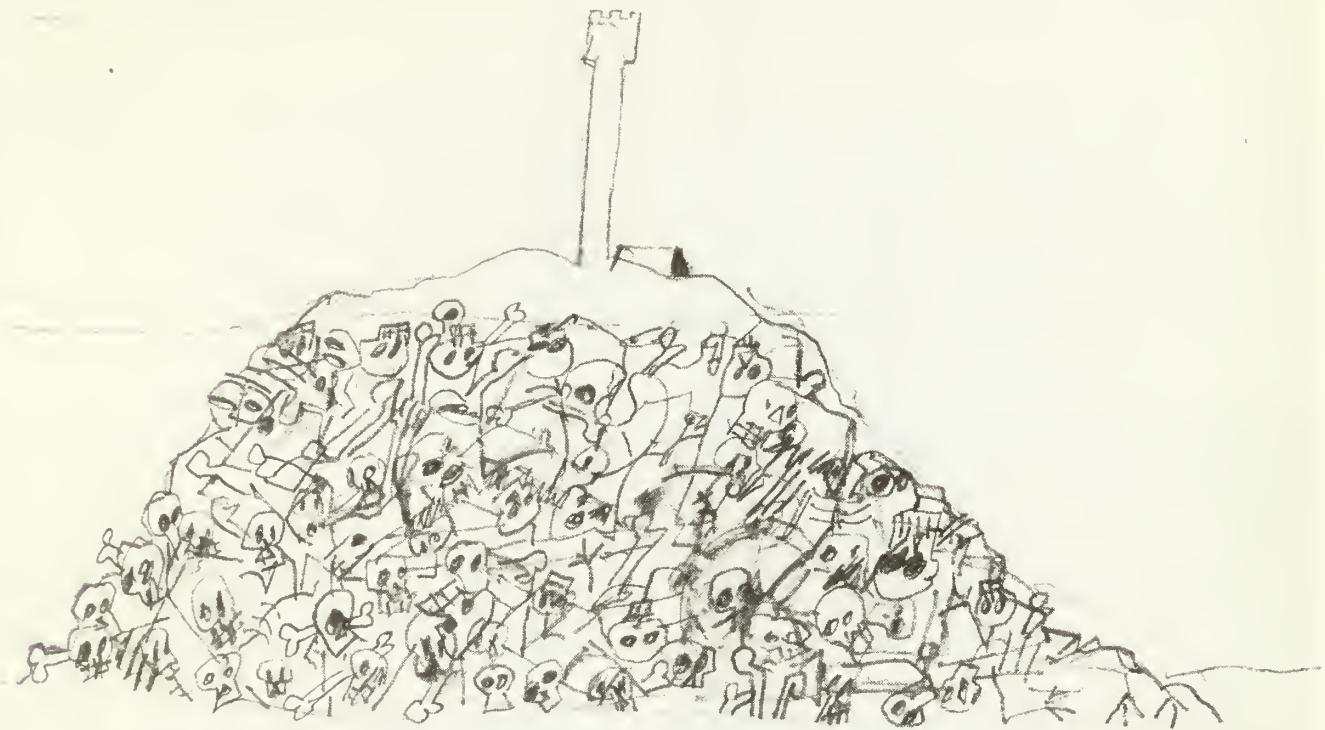
Lying on the balcony, I watched the foaming waves in the sky, as they went by through the brilliant light. Breasts, buttocks, heads, horses, elephants, clocks, crosses, paraded before my eyes. I was a witness to monstrous couplings, titanic struggles, tumults and gatherings of crowds. All the phantasmagoria of my childhood came back to my life at my command.

*Jason Shinder's work recently appeared in the anthology Under 35: The New Generation of American Poets, edited by Nicholas Christopher (Doubleday), and in American Poetry Review. He is a member of the Writing Committee.*

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# THE BiNATIONAL

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RAISING - ISSUES  
ISSUING - RAISING

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PAUL BOWEN

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# Postmodernism in Provincetown

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**By Christopher Busa**

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Sponsored jointly by Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and Institute of Contemporary Art, The BiNational, an exchange of recent art between Germany and the United States, was a complicated, elaborate attempt to define "the late 80s" in terms that could endure the scrutiny of another nation's gaze. A modest attempt to replicate the cross cultural conditions of The BiNational was held last fall at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. The BiNational Symposium in Provincetown, a spin-off program of the international survey show, was a regional forum for pursuing issues raised by the exhibitions.

Well publicized, the Provincetown event attracted a large crowd in the late hour of a long season. Perhaps 200 people materialized, filling chairs in a tall-ceilin-

ged gallery peaked with skylights, or standing, their backs to the surrounding walls, where paintings hung salon style. Outside, rain blew at a slant. The October streets were largely deserted. Many shops had closed for the season, their display windows covered with old plywood. Elsewhere in post-season Provincetown, people were huddled indoors, watching Bush campaign on television, fascinated by what he meant when he promised no new taxes, saying "Read my lips" by way of clarification. Later, replayed on the news, while the camera swooped in for a close-up of the candidate's face, I found myself watching his lips and realizing I had never before noticed the lips of a politician as he actually spoke. His lips were saying, "Read my mind."

After eight years with an actor for President, we have come to accept simulation as the medium of pervasive social life. In its resemblance to reality, the simulated experience alludes to what it does not

embody. It lives in a state of dependency upon the original. If it was the task of modernism to produce the original, it is the revenge of postmodernism to give identity to the clone. As Marshall McLuhan prophesized in *Understanding Media*, we get the message through the medium, distorted by the medium, which always appears corrupt and degrading, until it is enshrined as art by the next generation. Soon artists will be running for President.

Postmodernism, as a label for the sensibility of the late 80s, describes a double awareness in consciousness that has become necessary in negotiating everyday life. The ability to decode the hidden meaning in a poem has been extended popularly into reading the subtext of an automobile ad, reading the body language of a stranger on a city street, or reading the moist lips of a presidential candidate, vivid through the magic of color television and stage make-up. Most of the art in the BiNational reflected a bias in favor of such

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art that addressed issues in consumerism, simulation theory, and kitsch taste. Through a superabundance of conscious borrowing, the artist's subject is secured by quotation or appropriation, borrowing rather than "stealing" in the old fashioned modernist way T.S. Eliot meant when he said that bad poets borrow but great poets steal. In borrowing what is available in the public domain, the artist becomes ethical at the cost of his originality.

Selected were 27 artists between the ages of 28 and 38. All were living and working in New York except for four California artists and the Starn Twins of Boston. The exhibition would receive a harsh press, especially from Boston critics such as David Bonetti, who questioned Boston's ability to speak in "an independent voice in current international art discourse." Created in tandem with an equivalent, "German Art of the Late 80s," the exchange of these exhibitions was intended to provide opportunity for cross-cultural, or bi-national, comparison. Regarding the American survey, Bonetti fairly complained, "Little is new here, little is fresh; it's just visual representations of ideas bandied about in New York art bars for the past 10 years." At the same time, The BiNational remained an impressive show of interesting artists, consolidating rather than extending a concept of the postmodern. Writing favorably in *Contemporanea*, Christian Leigh explained, "These larger than life exhibitions—Whitney Biennials, Carnegie Internationals, Venice Biennales, and so forth—bear an uncanny resemblance to Hollywood's ancient ritual of consumption, the Academy Awards. They all boil down to who's there and who isn't. What they do well, aside from their entertainment value and the allure they hold for the new art-world gentry, is to act as barometers of trends."

"Versions of Pastoral in Some Recent American Art" is the title of the introductory essay by Thomas Crow in the three-pound BiNational catalogue, which also contains fascinating interviews with the artists. The quaint choice of the pastoral as a mode for defining the postmodern is made plausible by reference to the

more specialized meaning that the literary theorist William Empson gave to the pastoral. More than an opposition between the little world of natural simplicity and the great world of elaborate civilization, the pastoral is a device for an inversion of sophistication. The pastoral, Empson said, is a putting of the complex into the simple: "I now abandon my specialized feelings because I am trying to find better ones, so I must balance myself for a moment by imagining the feelings of the simple person . . . I must imagine his way of feeling because the refined thing must be judged by the fundamental thing."

Prior to the Provincetown symposium, coordinated locally by the Fine Arts Work Center as well as the Art Association, representatives from The BiNational made a preliminary trip to the Cape, showing slides of the work selected and commenting on the artists. These artists were Ross Bleckner, St. Clair Cemin, Constance DeJong, Tim Ebner, Karen Finley, Robert Gober, Peter Halley, Connie Hatch, Tishan Hsu, Mike Kelly, Jeff Koons, Tony Labat, Annette Lemieux, McDermott and McGough, Tony Oursler, Stephen Prina, Richard Prince, Tim Rollins and K.O.S., Lorna Simpson, Doug and Mike Starn, Haim Steinbach, Phillip Taaffe, Meyer Vaisman, Meg Webster, James Welling and Christopher Wool. Agreeing with Trevor Fairbrother, one of three talented curators of the exhibition, that "a lot of this work is about good and bad taste," the Provincetown community invited four BiNational artists, McDermott and McGough, Lorna Simpson and Meg Webster, to participate in a dialogue with three Provincetown artists, Jay Critchley, Jim Peters, and Anna Poor.

Precisely because of its colonial status, Provincetown was selected as a site for this symposium. A dour Welsh artist, Paul Bowen, now a year-round resident of Provincetown, made a drawing of the evening as he saw it: Like a monument on a grave, Provincetown's Pilgrim Monument, the world's tallest freestanding granite structure, sits diminutive on a mountain of skulls. He said he made the drawing instead of standing at the door and handing

out raisins to people as they passed. Why? "I don't know why," he said. "It just came to me, I guess because raisins are shriveled things." Raisins, he explained, reminded him of the black eye sockets in skulls. More moderate in her reaction, the president of the Art Association, Anne Lord, was intrigued by the work without being attracted to it. She said that it was "urban and consumer oriented" while "the art here reflects the outdoor environment." Provincetown is a two-seasoned urban village, governed by a participatory democracy through traditional New England town meetings, in which the audience actively governs. All the while it remains situated 50 miles out in the Atlantic, surrounded on three sides by glittering water, reflecting light so that the atmosphere is refracted with a hallucinatory clarity. Meanwhile, not far from the beach where Thoreau left his footprints and later wrote, "A man may stand there and put all America behind him," patches of stunted pine emerge heroically out of the bald domes of sand dunes that, moving to the will of the prevailing wind, are burying the trees alive. Perhaps imperfectly, Provincetown partakes of the pastoral.

**A**fter Paul Resika introduced the artists, reminding the audience that Matisse said every artist should have his tongue cut out, the artists agreed to discuss why they lived where they lived, why they chose some of the content of their work, whether the audience played a role in their art, whether their art was another item on the commodity market, and whether ambitions for sexual or political reform played a role in their work. To them, these were the topics that seemed worth making choices about.

Doubtless, one feature of postmodernism is its intense pluralism, which is responsible for elevating the importance of performance art, photography, conceptual art, and art that employs words or text. Painting is no longer the dominant medium of the leading artists, but one of many. On the Provincetown panel, only Jim Peters and the team of McDermott and

## THE BiNATIONAL

McGough were painters. In view of this variety of mediums competing for a center, the panel's moderator, Barbara Baker, asked if artists were not themselves agents of change, changing the way for the public to think or feel.

Jay Critchley said, "I think this issue is changing our idea of what art is all about in this century. When I started doing my performances, for the first five years people laughed at my work. That was all right. I came through the back door."

Jim Peters said, "Somehow it is very difficult to paint about specific political situations. People do do it. Golub does. But Picasso once said, when there was pressure on artists to paint Communist pictures, 'Find painters who are Communist and have them paint paintings.' "

Anna Poor said, "I think artists are extremely powerful. They have been throughout history. They have a social responsibility to do something with that power."

Critchley, Peters, and Poor each shared strong social concerns. But so did the visiting artists.

Lorna Simpson remarked, "I think showing in galleries and museums is elitist. Your audience is very select. I once did a piece on billboards around Times Square."

Meg Webster suggested at more length, "I see two ways that art may attempt to make a change. One is by its content. The other way is through the formal aspect of presenting a visual object, which changes vision by how it appears. In this century, art became abstract. It talked about how man looked at things outside of use. An artist can either talk about something directly, or make an object that changes perception. The content of a formal object is too subtle a way to express oneself. Right now, we are screaming out: we are polluting ourselves, poisoning ourselves. We all feel very concerned. If there were a safer environment, we might be thinking about abstractions,

about dealing with vision or plastic issues. It's just that right now, we're not safe. Someone's got a button with megatons of nuclear energy. When we are safer, the time will reverse itself."

Over the course of two and a half hours, the liveliest moment occurred shortly after David McDermott made a stirring political speech about the artist as an agent of change: "I think somebody has to rule the world. It might as well be the artist. When artists realize that the imaginative facility is the most powerful facility on the earth, and when they believe in that facil-

and parties."



cDermott, like McGough, dresses in well-bred Victorian clothes. That night he wore a velveteen coat with a high collar. His old-fashioned tie was pinned with an antique onyx stud. His hair was parted in the middle. He wore silk stockings and velvet knee breeches. Somewhat in the boyish manner of Pee Wee Herman, McDermott's suit seemed one size too small. Shortly after he delivered his magnificent speech, a woman stood up from the audience, asking earnestly,

"David said that one of the most powerful things on earth is the artist's imagination. I wondered what he thought about the universe?"

McDermott repeated the question, "You want me to tell you about what I think of the universe?" While the audience broke into laughter, the moderator, a director of the regional arts lottery council in Cambridge, said she would give McDermott three minutes to reply. McDermott stood up slowly from the sitting panel and began singing that old favorite, "Imagination," seemingly making up the words as he went along:

*My imagination, your imagination,  
Our imagination,  
Makes this world sublime*

Still singing, he strolled behind his fellow panelists, spreading his arms as he carried his voice to the higher ranges of the falsetto. He sang several more verses and concluded with a bow:

*People stop and tell me their  
marvelous schemes,  
They won't tell us if they knew my  
dreams.*

*Nothing will be beside us  
Though the shadows hide us*

McDermott and McGough are self-styled as a duo whose individuality is

*"I think  
somebody has  
to rule the world.  
It might as well  
be the artist."*

*—David McDermott*

ity, they will rule. As long as they think of themselves as failures, decadent types, as long as they look at the military and political people as the power, then they will never take over the world. In terms of class, race, religion, intellect, artists are perfect to rule the world. They would be perfect to decide what the world should do. They are a very good check and balance on each other. Also, they are tolerant of sexual perversions, which is unusual. People that tolerate race do not necessarily tolerate odd sexual interests. I think artists should rule the earth. They are the most inventive people. Today, the military people are using all the art ideas from 50 years ago. In 50 years the politicians will be using the ideas we have now. Now is the time for artists to take over the world. We could do it through Hollywood

## THE BiNATIONAL

hidden in the shadows of their art. Each painting is jointly signed, sometimes in florid 19th century script, "Mssrs. McDermott and McGough," as if they were an anachronistic pair of society painters. The contribution of each artist is obscure. McGough said that sometimes he would put down an idea, sometimes McDermott would. One painting, "Time Reverse Spiral," in which the graphic image of a spiral was taken from a futurist film of 1917, refers back to the 19th century. Peter, according to David, "blocked it out on a canvas, but it looked like a minimal geometric painting. He asked me what I thought would be a good idea and he came up with the concept of time going backwards, so that when you reach the year 2000, the next year is 1999. We go back from there. We go backwards. Life has always gone forward, but it would be truly modern to go backwards."

McDermott said that they never give up on a painting. "We eventually finish all works that get started, because we want these paintings to sell. We feel that, once they sell, they're finished. If they don't sell, they come back to the studio. We keep looking at them. We add something. The collectors finish our work for us. At first when collectors came, we'd say this isn't finished or that is almost finished, and we want to work on it some more.. They would leave without buying anything. So we decided, everything is finished. You would be surprised at what they buy."

Choosing to live without electricity, McDermott and McGough eat most of their meals in restaurants. As vegetarians, they share the opinion of William Blake that all wholesome food is caught



### McDERMOTT SINGS

without a net or a trap. Their values are quaintly idealistic, yet radical. They wish women would cease to be baby machines and go instead into government. They wish that all men would preach brotherly love while practicing sexual love. They wish the past could be changed, so they cull dated images from old magazines and repaint them in such a way as to suggest a foreknowledge of the future. Desires that are conventionally taboo are presented as



**THEADVENT—1923, 1987**  
**McDERMOTT & McGOUGH**

being fulfilled in the past, thereby "legitimizing them," as McDermott put it. Another painting, of naked boys, "Rub a Dub Dub, Three Boys in a Tub," is taken from a 1936 Bon Ami advertisement in *Red-book*. "It was an advertisement we thought was subliminal," McGough said of the innocent family bath, which was wholesome in the manner of Norman Rockwell Americana.

"The painting is directly copied from it, except that the young boy and the man were clothed. We thought it was a very erotic advertisement and we just showed it for what it was."

By way of introduction, each of the artists showed slides of their work. Lorna Simpson uses a combination of photography accompanied with an emblematic text, usually presented in a series. Simpson pursued documentary photography in New York before moving to California to study film in graduate school. One of only three black students in the entire graduate program, she found collaboration difficult, realizing that "a lot of my material is 'black.'" Her photographs show only portions of people, a gesture or a detail, but never the face. Particularly from documentary photography, she learned that there is a "silent agreement" between the photographer and the viewer about the intention and meaning of a work: "The viewer wants so much to see a face to read the look in the eyes or the expression on the mouth. I want viewers to realize that that is one of the mechanisms which they use to read a photograph. If they think, 'How am I supposed to read this if I don't see the face?' they may realize that they are making a cultural reading, learned over the years, and perhaps they will see that it is not a given."

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Shy, polite, quietly and briefly articulate, Simpson always accompanies her photographs with a brief text or word plaque. As the photographs record glimpses, the text traps seemingly stray language. Sometimes this stray language is evocative and fragmentary, a sampling of voices obtained from an ongoing and fuller story, which is implied but not given. In other of Simpson's serial pieces, she will analyze categories of cliches, the cliche or stereotype itself being weakly descriptive even as it manifests its blind organizational power. Beneath the image of a black man wearing a white T-shirt, standing out of frame, exposing a glimpse of his hands on his hips, Simpson writes:

**Cecile with hands on hips got angry & told him about himself in the kitchen**

**he stood by the refrigerator**

Providing clues on how to "read" each other, word and photograph collaborate to achieve a resonance neither has by itself. The moderator observed that Simpson's work was very cool and quiet, yet at the same time, it implied an impassioned response. Simpson said, "The photographs might be taken as a set of very defensive, very masculine poses, as, for instance in the first one, in which a man is seen from his back with his hands on his hips. If a cop were to look at this, he might see a black man who is assumed dangerous, a suspect and a threat. Without even seeing his face, anyone, white or black, might imagine it to be a confrontation or defiant pose."

Another work examines what we can learn from the back of somebody's head, when that head is a black woman, shown from the neck up, wearing ten

different hair styles in ten separate frames. We know the woman, not by her face, but by the style of her hair, done now with bows, now with braids, now spiky. Attached to each image is a label, or a cliche, drawn from fashion magazines: "Long and Silky," "Country Fresh," "Magnetic." Here her language is effective precisely in the degree it fails to be descriptive. As ads are not read for conscious consumption, so her work exploits the way we unconsciously read images, exposing our hidden

perhaps the essence of modernism.

McG Webster's dirty blond hair is beautifully brushed and falls simply to her shoulders. When she arrived in Provincetown the day before she would appear on the panel, after driving in from New York, she had culture shock, she said, from the small scale. A city artist who uses raw earth as her medium, Webster creates minimal and geometric forms, not unrelated to the very parabolic dunes she passed while entering Provincetown. Her materials are sand, earth, water, and seeds. After finishing an MFA at Yale, with a thesis exhibit in which grass grew out of mounds of earth, kept alive with special gallery lighting, she began shaping loose materials. Packed earth, she realized, was both organic and geometric. Using a brush, she shaped a large cone of fine sand, learning to work the surface so that it became integrated.

In the gallery, the geometric purity of her minimal shapes tend to decay slightly, as grass grows, the sand crumbles in small patches, or a bed of moss begins to sink in the center. The outdoors, translated indoors, takes on an aspect of the intimate and the miniature. Also producing work intended for the outdoors alone, such as a large field, she has encircled modest spaces with thick earth walls, entered through a narrow slot, up a steep ladder, or down a ramp beneath the ground. Inside, in the insulated, sound absorbing warmth of living earth, rough

textured and sweet smelling, she obliges one to get acquainted with intimacy. As in a type of garden, ceremoniously, the dense space contains a bed, a bench, or rock seats where two can sit knee to knee, listening to each other breathe. "I think I drag dirt and plants and deal with growing because I live in New York, where these are so missing," she said. "One day I brought ani-



**sometimes Sam stands like his mother**

### **GESTURES / REENACTMENTS, 1985** **LORNA SIMPSON**

assumptions to ourselves. Implicated in the process of understanding, the audience, as a perspective of viewing, takes on a structural position in the work itself. The audience, positioned within the work, therefore has its own active voice. This amounts to a new orality, an implicit social dialogue, which is perhaps the essence of postmodernism, just as subjectivity was

## THE BiNATIONAL

mals into the gallery, a strange and wonderful event. The city seemed so artificial."

The question of where one chooses to live was one of several issues the panelists addressed. The moderator, who herself lived for several summers in a shack on the dunes, asked the artists if they wanted to live in the center of the art world or in an isolated place. Peters said, "As in any place there is the immediate space of your studio, then there is the larger environment around you. Every square inch of Provincetown is so compacted. Every

Peters says is "the real hero of my paintings." She is the center of an evolving narrative concerning male/female relationships. In Peters' view, a relationship involves a past, present, and future. Scenes from these temporal moments are tucked into various rooms in the painting, sometimes into ducts, holes or vents. The man urinating in the bathroom may be the same man making love on the bed.

Peters points to film for suggesting temporal devices that a painter may learn from: "In Renais' *Last Year at Marienbad* people would start one sentence in one set of clothes and finish it in another set of

itself in the work. Like memory, these temporal dislocations can be untidy, and figures who have shifted positions while Peters has painted their story appear half buried in the paint. The trace of time passing, these ghosts remain as evidence that a story has happened, which is now obscured.

Peters graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, where he took courses in theoretical physics and shied away from the weapons courses. Winning an Atomic Energy Commission fellowship, he took a leave of absence from the Navy and attended MIT, receiving a mas-



### EARTH BED

little lawn has a private place where somebody puts their chair in the summer. When someone in Provincetown has another kid, they throw another room on the back of the house and run a pipe and a cord out the wall. That's the extra room. All my paintings are made like that."

Many people find a raw elegance in Jim Peters' paintings. Cosmetically, they can appear crude and muddy, often depicting seedy bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchens. At one with this atmosphere, like its angel, is the figure of an undressed woman, whom

clothes. In film, or in reading a book, the past is what has past, temporally. But in painting, you don't lose the past. It remains available." Especially fluent with creating painterly volumes, Peters abruptly changes scale and skewers one plane with another. In addition, he incorporates three dimensional elements, such as a pane of glass placed in a painted window, or a real stove pipe emitting painted smoke. At other times he will take a photograph of a person standing in front of one of his paintings, then incorporate the photograph

### MEG WEBSTER

ter's degree in nuclear engineering. At 30, having suddenly begun painting while living in Cambridge, Peters was accepted at the Maryland Institute of Art, where he received an MFA in painting. After this impressive career change, he was accepted as a fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, continuing to live here for the past 10 years. In 1985 his work was exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum, and he shows annually in New York at the CDS Gallery. For Peters, painting and physics are very close. Both are abstract.

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When Rutherford was experimenting with the electron, he could not see what he was working with. "It's the same when you approach the canvas," Peters explained, "You don't see it."

Growing up on Cape Cod where his father was the caretaker of a Coast Guard Station, Peters has returned here all his life, he said, because he respects the raw improvisations engendered by living in a marginal environment. In the architecture of dune shacks, built quirkily with whatever wood was conveniently available on an isolated beach, and in the mechanical rigging of the local fishing boats, many wooden antiques, he said that he saw form follow function. "Provincetown is on the edge of raw nature. Manmade and natural objects are strewn about and weathered, impressing one with their beauty. Some artists make art from those objects, others make art that feels like those objects."

Anna Poor said that she was only a summer resident of the Cape. Her Boston studio has bars on the inside and the outside of the windows, but she is frightened by the freedom of the Cape's isolation.

"Living on the Cape, you walk down the street in the middle of the night. It's so calm. Nobody's after you, nobody wants to hurt you. I like going there, I would like to be calm. I would like to have a nice easy life, but I would get bored. Everybody's the same color, same size and shape, on the Cape. You know, I grew up in the city, New York City. Still, I've always been fascinated by the idea of living up there. It's a lust I have."

Another lust of hers, she says, is survival, "because it's necessary." Escape,

from impending disaster, is the central theme of her painted wood carvings, which are the topic of a separate article on her elsewhere in this issue. Like Lorna Simpson, Poor is interested in the classifying power of images, which can group social experience in such a way as to remove it from the individual's experience. Teaching sculpture at the Mass College of Art, she began to feel that she was doing something extremely useless, "training people for a life as an artist when society supports one artist out of 500,000." She would tell her students, "Learn something else as well as art." Six years ago she cut back on teach-

ing at the bitter joke, Poor asked the audience to pardon her love of words and quoted the title of one of her works, "They Will Eat Their Bread with Horror and Drink Their Water with Anxiety Because of the Violence in the Land."

After Poor had finished explaining the especially laborious process she goes through in carving her friezes, totems, and columns, McDermott shared a lesson he had learned in art school, where he was taught that "If you capture what you were doing in one line, a single line, that was the best." This attitude was reinforced in the real world when he and McGough were

given Julian Schnabel's old studio for two years. "We were in contact with him and he was advising us. At his other studio, I'd see him taking a brush and very easily running it across the canvas. Two days later, after looking at it, he would do some little something else," McDermott said, making a precise gesture with his thumb and forefinger held close to his eye. "I feel I'm not as good a painter," he said candidly. "I'm doing dots and details. He can take that brush and run it right down the can-

vas and it's there. He gets thousands of dollars for that. Of course, his paintings are bigger than mine. It takes me a year to finish one of my paintings and we get a measly thousands of dollars."

The moderator interrupted, "Do you think the marketplace is the measurement. Is the essence of art its commodity value?"

"Absolutely, the marketplace is the measurement," McDermott said quickly.

But McGough disagreed. For an example he referred to a painting he had painted with McDermott. "If you go to a



**HER STUDIO, 1989**

**JIM PETERS**

ing art to earn the bulk of her income by teaching English as a second language in a Boston night school. She inquired rhetorically of the audience, as the panel was discussing economic strategies for artistic survival, "What do you do, as an artist? Do you waitress? Do you teach? Do you marry money?" Her very name, "Poor," makes her wonder if her lot as an artist has doomed her by genetic linkage to her ancient ancestors, where in England, the blacksmiths were called "Smith," the millers "Miller," and the poor "Poor." Cough-

## THE BiNATIONAL

party and you are homoerotic, and you want to know if there are any other people like you at the party, you say, 'Are there any friends of Dorothy?' Meaning Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, Judy Garland." McGough said that their painting, "A Friend of Dorothy's," wasn't painted for the marketplace. It contains words they are familiar with, which they wanted to put in a painting. "Cocksucker," "fag," "fairy," and "homo" are set in blocks of type which float at odd angles to each other. "I looked at it when we finished and thought, this is a strange painting. The gallery told us they would have to put a very low price on it since nobody would like it."

"They said it wouldn't increase in value," McDermott confirmed.

"Nobody wants to have 'cocksucker' hanging on their wall when they are giving a dinner party," McGough said. "It was exactly the opposite of what I think collectors collect."

Anna Poor seemed chagrined when McDermott said, "We are making products for millionaires and their collections."

"The marketplace is a measurement of chance and luck," Poor shot back. "If I actually got tons of money from winning the lottery, I'd get someone to help me do my work."

McDermott counseled her, "I think you should get somebody now. You should just believe that your work is going to sell. You should find somebody to help you. You should hire them now. You should pay them and get it going. Maybe your mother will give you the money."

Out of politeness to the moderator, whose face crumpled helplessly with laughter, Jim Peters interjected, "The great part about art is that it's subjective. If you are a failure economically, you can say nobody understands your work. If you are a failure aesthetically, but not economically,

you can teach and say you have a job. I don't think anyone here thinks what a painting is bought for has anything to do with its ultimate value. I also don't think it's just luck or a lottery. Schnabel gets high prices because he has a way of dealing with scale. I don't think there's a question in anyone's mind that he's a good painter."

"What about Jay?" Anna Poor asked.

Jay Critchley had been the first panelist to introduce himself. Telling the audience that "it's always fun to go first," Critchley went on to explain that he is a multi-media artist who uses staged rituals,

is consoled by impressive titles as "founder," "consultant," or "president" of at least half a dozen fictitious organizations he has created. From the ivory tower of these imaginary organizations, which mimic corporate structures, Critchley produces periodic performance pieces, issuing press releases and inspiring newspaper stories that document the event. As an artist, his main influences are Ronald Reagan ("I've learned a lot from him in terms of the media"), the Bible ("a lot in the Bible"), and Joseph Beuys ("of course").

Wearing a conservative business suit,

a dark tie, and horn-rimmed glasses, he looked incongruous while he presented a slide of himself in drag at the recent centennial celebration for the Statue of Liberty. Projected through the slide onto the wall, larger than life, he looked not altogether unglamorous, wearing a gown made from 3000 plastic tampon applicators. He was crowned with a coronet of the pink tubes. These he collected from the local beaches. When he first began collecting them, he said, he didn't know what they were. He eventually found out. He learned that they came from the sewer system that empties into Boston Harbor. From them he made sand castles and ribbed hats. Because the screening equipment at the sewer's head

works stations did not filter them from the flow of wastewater, tampons had become an abundant and underutilized artistic material, available for the taking, like driftwood. His organization, TACKI, prints on its letterhead a motto taken from the base of the Statue of Liberty:

Give me your tired, your poor  
Your huddled masses, yearning  
to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your  
teeming shore.



**THEY WILL EAT THEIR  
BREAD WITH ANXIETY AND  
DRINK THEIR WATER WITH  
HORROR BECAUSE OF THE  
VIOLENCE IN THE LAND.**  
ANNA POOR

written proposals, and the press itself as a medium for many of his projects, which concern social issues such as AIDS, environmental pollution, and the "recycling" of nuclear power plants for post-nuclear recreation. Although he admits that he has trouble giving some of his work away, he

## THE BiNATIONAL

McDermott congratulated Critchley on his work. Perhaps he admired the parody of feminism, but he told Critchley, "I think it's great you cleaned up the beaches and brought attention to those plastic things. You are to be commended."

"Thank you," Critchley said.

"I think your work is very good, but I wouldn't know how to sell it," McDermott continued. "I would try to turn it into a product that millionaires could buy. I feel I'm aware of the attention span of the public, from watching television and motion pictures. When I work on a painting, I try to keep that in mind. I picture the type of people that will come into the gallery and look. When we lived in a small town, old people of the church used to come to us, thrilled to find out we were artists. They had a very 19th century idea about artists. I didn't want to hurt these people and I wished to paint paintings they would like."

"What happened?" Critchley asked.

"We moved," McDermott said.

After more than two hours of wit, wisecracks, and sudden paradoxes in the manner of Oscar Wilde, who said, "Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital," the discussion concluded when McDermott suggested that Critchley run as a candidate for President, but do it in the name of art.

"I will," Critchley said, "if you'll back me with your money."

"I'll handle your advertising," said McDermott.

At the beginning of the evening, in his fatherly remarks that served as an introduction to the symposium, Paul Resika

reminded the audience that panels of artists have not always been with us. A witness himself to some of the extraordinary sessions at the Club during the 50s, Resika said that panels were a phenomenon of modernism: "They never had them in Venice or in Holland. They never existed in the 19th century. They only began, maybe, in the political days of the

recorded "after three evenings of private discussion by Joan Mitchell, Elaine de Kooning, Frank O'Hara, Mike Goldberg, and Norman Bluhm, with careful attention to misattribution and misquotation in keeping with the spirit of the art world. (Some of the quotes, however, are accurate.)" The panel purports to be a record of art world gossip, in which someone is com-

elled always to quote another, as when Frank O'Hara says, "Well, Pavia says, nowadays everyone talks about you behind your back in front of your face." In certain respects, panels that took place in a time when the art world could be housed in a club are very similar to panels in postmodern time when the art world is perhaps less clubby than corporate, reflecting a more complex if not a higher degree of organization.

Resika recalled that earlier time when the expression "spin doctor" did not exist: "Panels were assembled every week, and those abstract painters that were making their way, with great care, got up and said their few words. As to how you took those words, it all depended on who said them. It was a very military establishment: there were generals, brigadiers, all the way down, and there were quite a few privates who've now moved up in the ranks. Many of us didn't even like to be part of that military establishment, but we had to take them quite seriously. I remember one time in the heyday of those abstract days when some asked if there could be a panel of figurative artists. A weird thing. It was weird and it was in the decadence of the Club already. I remember Milton Resnick asking from the back of the room, getting up and saying, 'You figurative artists have a bad name.' Now,

*(continued on page 172)*



**MS. TAMPON LIBERTY**  
**JAY CRITCHLEY**

John Reed Club, and they reached their first great power in the days of the artists' club on Eighth Street."

Once, the proceedings of an imaginary panel at the Club were documented. "5 Participants in a Hearsay Panel," was based on a script by Elaine de Kooning,

# *Eastern Long Island's Native Artists*

By Helen A. Harrison

The area of eastern Long Island called "The Hamptons" by visitors but known generically as "The East End" has been a renowned artists' mecca for well over a century, attracting some of the nation's most celebrated painters and sculptors as seasonal or full-time residents. From Thomas Moran in the late 1870s to Julian Schnabel, Eric Fischl, and Susan Rothenberg today, America's art stars have immigrated to these shores in a steady stream.

Hearing the area described as an "art colony," one might justifiably conclude that all of its artist-residents are indeed immigrants. Not so. A few of them are natives of the East End, born and bred in the bosom of the art community that most people assume is composed entirely of those, as the locals put it, "from away."

In fact, the earliest recorded art activity in the region was carried on by natives. The first locally-born artist was probably the limner Abraham Guilielmus Dominy Tuthill (1776-1843), who hailed from Oyster Ponds—now called Orient—on the Island's North Fork. In the late 18th century, his portraits of local notables, including the Reverend Samuel Buell, pastor of the East Hampton Presbyterian Church, gained him sponsorship for study in London, where, he claimed, he was a pupil of Benjamin West. On his return in 1808, Tuthill pursued a successful career as a portrait painter, executing commissions in New York State, New England, and as far afield as Detroit and Cincinnati.

Other native portrait painters active in the area during the early and mid 19th century include the miniaturist Nathaniel



MARY STUBELEK

## FROM THE HAMPTONS

Rogers (1788-1844) of Bridgehampton, one of the founding members of the American Academy; and Hubbard Latham Fordham (1794-1872) and Orlando Hand Bears (1811-1851), both born in Sag Harbor. Although Fordham established himself in New York City for a time and traveled to clients in New England, he maintained a studio in his home town throughout his career. Sag Harbor was then in its heyday as a major whaling port, and Fordham took the likenesses of several of the town's prominent sea captains, often posed before scenes that recalled their voyages to far-off locales. Bears also worked in this manner, portraying the affluent ship owners, captains, merchants, and their families.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the picturesque character of the East End villages and countryside lured an ever-increasing band of plein-air painters. Some of the artist-visitors also had family ties to the region, even though they were not born locally. Among them was Bruce Crane (1857-1937), who was related to the Mulfords, one of East Hampton's oldest families. Crane recalled first visiting the area in 1880. He was particularly drawn to the bucolic farmsteads and meadows surrounding the charming village of East Hampton, with its antique windmills, saltbox cottages, and rustic inhabitants—attributes that offered innumerable motifs for landscape and genre painters alike.

George Bellows (1882-1925), the well-known Ash Can School painter, had East End ties on both sides of the family. His father was a native of Good Ground, now known as Hampton Bays,

and on his mother's side, his grandfather and great-grandfather had been Sag Harbor whaling captains. During his childhood, Bellows and his parents traveled east from Columbus annually to spend their summer holidays at the family's big white house on Amity Street in Sag Harbor, where, in 1910, he and his bride broke their journey home to New York from their honeymoon at Montauk.

In more recent times, as the region has attracted succeeding generations of art colonists, it has also continued to nurture a modicum of native talent. For those born and raised here, the existence of an active art community has provided both validation of their artistic impulses and a sympathetic milieu in which to develop. Unlike most artists who come from areas outside the urban centers of art activity, they are able to find stimulation and support right in their own back yard.

The four contemporary artists with whom I spoke have all been committed to art from an early age, yet until adolescence were not aware of being part of a larger art community. "Growing up, I thought I was sort of an oddball," says Christine Najdzionek, who was born in Southampton in 1951. Although she grew up with Mary Stubelek, a fellow Southampton native who would also go on to become an artist, she did not realize until much later that she and Stubelek had that destiny in common. As Najdzionek recalls, "I was the only one who was a raving art lunatic."

Less vocal about her ambition, Stubelek nevertheless received strong support from her family. The others I interviewed



**JOSH DAYTON**



**ROSEMARY SZCZYGIEL**

## FROM THE HAMPTONS

also report that their families either accepted or encouraged their artistic ambitions, but Stubelek alone benefited from growing up in a household that includes several creative members. "My father painted as a hobby," she says, "and he took classes at the Parrish Art Museum. My older sister took classes there too. I think that's when I became interested. Both my mother and my father loved art."

As teenagers, both she and Najdzioneck were conscious of the presence of a few well-established artists in the community. In contrast to East Hampton, which historically has had a much larger, more diverse artist population, the Southampton group was small, and was dominated by the flamboyant presence of Larry Rivers and the more conservative example of Fairfield Porter. Rivers, whose bohemian behavior made him something of a local character, was sought out by Najdzioneck at the age of 13. She recalls: "I asked him one of the typical questions: how does one go about becoming a great artist? He said I should believe deeply in God—which I already knew, or surmised. I was really disappointed, because I was expecting some pearls of wisdom, practical facts instead of general philosophical things. More of a how-to, to give me direction."

Direction wasn't easy to come by, especially when there were few, if any, like-minded students in the local schools. For Josh Dayton, a scion of an old East Hampton family, high school art instruction was geared toward commercial work. It wasn't until his senior year that he began to benefit from the encouragement of a sympathetic classmate. "I met Robert Long when he moved out here from New York City," he explains. Long, who would become a poet, "was really into modern art. He sort of turned me on to the artists who were out here." Dayton then began to associate with older artists in the community, joining a life drawing group and engaging in the give-and-take that stimulates the creative process.

The area provided Dayton with a unique resource in the form of Alfonso Ossorio, who had been a close friend and supporter of Jackson Pollock. An artist in his own right, Ossorio is also an art collector whose estate on Georgica Pond once housed an important collection of Art Brut, as well as numerous canvases by Pollock and his

fellow Abstract Expressionists. Dayton's father, who operates a construction business, was called in to help Ossorio build a series of cement and found-object sculptures on the property. As a high school senior, working as a laborer for his father, Dayton "got a tour of Alfonso's place, and actually got to work on some of his pieces. Just seeing his collection was a big encouragement." He was particularly impressed by Pollock's "Lavender Mist," which Ossorio then owned. "I caught on to that immediately," he says.

For Rosemary Szczygiel, a native of Riverhead, there was even more isolation in her earliest years of interest in art. "I remember as a kid getting involved in my artwork as another world, someplace to escape to," she says. She became aware of the nearby art community not long after she left high school, while living in Southampton, where she "began running into artists—older, more serious people." But rather than enrolling at the local campus of Long Island University, where such well-known artists as Rivers, Ilya Bolotowsky, and Ibram Lassaw were teaching, she chose initially to study art at the New York State University in Purchase. However, after her freshman year there, Southampton College lured her back to the area she swore she'd leave for good when she grew up. She applied for a scholarship, got it, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in art.

Najdzioneck also began her art studies elsewhere but came back to the East End to finish her degree. Following two years at New York State University in New Paltz, she dropped out of

college to paint full time. Returning to the East End, she met people involved in the art program at Southampton College, began sitting in on classes there, enrolled, and graduated in 1978. For Najdzioneck, the college offered the additional benefit of providing an internship to Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton, where she went on to work as a curatorial assistant for four years after graduation. "That was my real introduction to the art community," she says. Her parents encouraged her to become an art teacher, but at the time, "it just didn't seem plausible or realistic" to try to teach what she believed she herself was still learning. Museum work, and subsequent jobs at local galleries, provided a source of income while at the same time maintaining contact with her fellow artists. In another of their parallel



CHRISTINE NAJDZIONEK

## FROM THE HAMPTONS

moves, Stubelek also found herself a museum job right out of university. Although she was aware of the art program at Southampton College, and studied there with Peter Busa during a summer session, she chose Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York (with her junior year abroad in Florence), for her undergraduate work. Returning to Southampton after graduation in 1973, she was hired as curator of the Parrish Art Museum, where she worked for three years. In addition to providing her with art-related employment, the museum also furthered her painting career when, as winner of the top prize in the 1976 annual juried exhibition, she was awarded a one-person show there the following year. Since then, she has worked for her brothers' engineering firm and at a local frame shop while continuing to develop as an artist.

After an abortive year at the Philadelphia College of Art, where he was again steered toward commercial work, Dayton attended the New York Studio School for a year, although he says, "It seemed like four years, it was so intense." He also studied briefly in Italy. For several years, he lived and worked in Manhattan, doing construction jobs on the side and continuing to work for his father during the summers. He moved back to the East End about four years ago. "I think I was pretty well done with the city by then," he says. The return has benefited him both emotionally and professionally: "I think my work really improved a lot. It was happier. In the city, it got sort of dark." Szczygief, too, ventured elsewhere in search of broader horizons, but found herself drawn back, first from Georgia, where she considered attending college, and later from California. "It seemed like everywhere I went, I got flashes of the feeling, 'I've got this on Long Island,'" she recalls. "I drove back from California, and as soon as I could I got down to the ocean and I just kissed the beach."

Whether or not it is reflected directly in their imagery, the regional environment plays a significant role in these artists' work. In addition to the increasing presence of year-round artist-residents, the topography and climate, the relaxed style of life, and the ability to "get by" financially—in the cases of Dayton and Stubelek, by working in the family businesses—are important attractions. For Szczygief, the area's agricultural heritage was a crucial factor in her decision to return, and for a time she pursued horticulture as a possible secondary career. However, this proved to be too great a drain on the time and energy needed for her art, so she abandoned it in favor of a degree in art education, which she has just finished at Dowling College in Oakdale, Long Island.

In each artist's case, the decision to remain on the East End has come through a series of experiences and choices strongly influenced by the character of the place each has known from birth. There is no doubt that the presence of a vital, year-round art community, with its museums, commercial galleries, and even alternative spaces such as meeting halls, restaurants, and nightclubs where artists can show their work, is a strong inducement. The region's natural beauty—the beaches, woods, and wetlands that attract seasonal vacationers and permanent residents alike—is also a significant factor, as is its physical and psychological proximity to the Manhattan art world.

For natives, however, the decision to occupy one's own home territory is more complex than the sum of that area's obvious attractions. Is it merely the path of least resistance, or is it in fact a harder road than the one taken by the immigrant? As artists, these four straddle the terrain between the immigrants' camp and that of the natives, who have traditionally exhibited mixed feelings about the presence of an art community. Artists have long been credited with "discovering" the East End, and although it was in truth the railroad that opened the area to the tourist invasion, the artists undoubtedly added the same note of glamour that in more recent times has made SoHo a fashionable New York neighborhood. Whatever resentment, covert or open, that the locals might feel toward the artists coincidentally affects the natives among their number; by returning to their home ground, they have chosen to face this dilemma. Fortunately, the courage of these four indigenous artists has been rewarded.

"When I was younger," says Najdzionek, "I never envisioned myself being here [as an adult]. But there are so many artists here now that it's a much more comfortable place to live. There's so much going on, it's almost perfect." Dayton found creative direction after returning, but is reluctant to credit the art community with much influence on his development. "I think it was more the living style out here that affected my work, rather than specific painters," he says, although he acknowledges the importance of a few close artist friends whose encouragement he values. To Stubelek, the environment is central to her creative impulse, "probably more than I ever realized. The sky, the landscape, the changes that I've seen—I've probably only scratched the surface." In Szczygief's wanderings, she found aspects of other locales to engage her temporarily but not to captivate her permanently: "I loved the countryside, the weather was fine, the people were OK, but I wasn't home." □□

*Helen A. Harrison, a native of New York City, moved to the East End 12 years ago with her husband, Roy Nicholson, a painter who was born in England. She is the Curator of Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton, and an art critic for the Long Island section of the New York Times.*

# The Legacy of Lee Krasner

By Christopher Busa

High above a street off Park Avenue, in the building that houses the Asia Society, photographs of Lee Krasner and her husband Jackson Pollock line the office of Charles C. Bergman, the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of The Pollock-Krasner Foundation. The photographs of Krasner taken later in her life, after Pollock was dead, show a "fierce, undeluded woman" with the look of a "beanbag in repose," as Robert Hughes once described her, elaborating: "We all know the conventional picture of the art widow. She is held to be a sort of elephant keeper. For decades, in obscurity, she tends the elephant; waters it, feeds it, sweeps up behind it, schools it in the social graces, calms it when it runs amok and puts up with the trumpeting of its fellow pachyderms. Then, one day, the creature dies.

She becomes the curator of its myth, a terror to art historians and museum curators and dealers, vigilantly noting the offerings at the shrine and not forgetting a word of anything remotely critical that anyone once said, or might still have to say, about Jumbo."

Krasner's values were not the values of the late 80s. As a woman, a Jew, and an art widow, she carried a triple cross. Of her work as an artist, her teacher, Hans Hofmann said in 1937, "This is so good you would not know it was done by a woman." When Pollock was killed in an East Hampton car accident, while Krasner was away on her first trip ever to Europe, his paintings were just beginning to sell, and he and Krasner were just ceasing to be poor. Perhaps, as Barbara Rose speculates, abstract art enabled Krasner to overcome the ancient Jewish prohibition against making graven images. Inhabiting the very ghost of her mythic husband, Krasner's own inclusion in the sacred circle of first

generation abstract expressionists only occurred belatedly.

In 1981, three years before she died, Krasner drew up a will leaving her estate for the establishment of a foundation to aid "worthy and needy" artists. Today, The Pollock-Krasner Foundation is worth over 25 million dollars with assets largely in Krasner's and Pollock's paintings and drawings. In a recent interview with *Provincetown Arts*, Charles Bergman discussed Krasner's legacy.

Bergman would like to feel that The Pollock-Krasner Foundation has a special sensitivity to the emotional, as well as financial, difficulties of artists. Pollock himself wrestled with alcoholism and prolonged psychoanalysis. If Otto Rank is correct in saying that there are three types of people, normal people, neurotics, and artists, and that neurotics are simply unproductive artists, then an artist going through an unproductive phase is very prone to the frustration that can lead to an



Renate Ponsold

LEE KRASNER

## THE POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION

imbalance or illness. In the eyes of the foundation, this is hardly a stigma. Many people who apply to the foundation have problems with alcohol or drug abuse, as well as emotional or mental illness, and some grantees have used their funds for treatment. An artist could be earning a decent living and be faced suddenly with a catastrophic illness or emergency, wiping out his seemingly good income. It could be cancer or a studio fire, but AIDS is Bergman's most dramatic current example. His office receives desperate requests almost weekly. Though the illness can be so debilitating that the artist often is not able to produce, the foundation will award a grant to someone who is too sick to work with the hope that the money will be part of the rehabilitation process.

**L**ast December, he had just returned from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, countries from which The Pollock-Krasner Foundation had never received a grant application. Bergman's purpose in making the trip was to set up a network of US and foreign diplomats, local museum officials, critics, and artists who would encourage visual artists in the three countries to apply freely and directly to the foundation, like other artists all over the world. In the USSR alone he met with over 150 artists, always proud to say that Lee Krasner was a woman of Russian-Jewish descent. Having been to Europe many times, Bergman is no novice to travel. But the rigors of this month-long trip and the difficulty of working with an interpreter, were physically exhausting. In particular, he remembers the farewell words of one artist in Leningrad: "We live in a box looking out with binoculars at an upside down society."

He also observed how strange and convoluted was the Russian way of selling art. He saw artists attempting to get money due them from the Sotheby's auction last summer, which took place in Moscow. "The Russian artists supposedly got huge amounts of money. Not a single one of them had seen a cent when I left. Sometimes art is sold through the auspices of the

Ministry of Culture or through the Union of Soviet Artists or the Cultural Foundation of the USSR. If you went to the Soviet Union as a private citizen and wanted to buy work of an artist, I don't think that artist can legally sell it to you without it going through one of these jurisdictions. In the case of Czechoslovakia there is an organization called Art Centrum where you have to get a permit and a stamp, you the artist, if you wish to sell to a foreigner, whether a private citizen or an art dealer." Bergman made it very clear to officials that the foundation he represents did not give a hoot whether the artist was official or unofficial, union or nonunion.

Bergman credits his late father, who ran three leading teaching hospitals, as the stimulation for his social and humanitarian concern, as well as an appreciation of the arts in the broadest sense. One of those hospitals, Boston's Beth Israel, had been founded by his grandfather, a philanthropist. His father was a distant cousin of Bernard Berenson. During his junior year at Harvard, Bergman traveled with his family to visit Berenson at the Villa I Tatti in Florence. Early in his life, Bergman committed himself to mobilizing leadership and resources behind causes that enrich the quality of life.

He explained, "We gave a grant to an elderly and famous artist who was lying in a nursing home. The nursing home staff did not even know that this was a great artist. He was too sick to write his own application. As a result of our grant, he received excellent geriatric care and an art therapist. This artist who was comatose in bed was able to paint again. Whether his work will ever be sold is not relevant. Whether it will ever be exhibited is not important. Our grant, in this particular case, is in respect for the contribution, the *oeuvre*, the achievement, the merit of his work over his lifetime. In the case of younger artists, who are beset by tragic illness, we hope that our money will be useful as they begin the long and painful road to recovery. We know, with AIDS, we may be giving a grant to somebody who may not be here a year or two from now, but we don't know that for sure.

Some of our grants have gone to artists who were suicidal with despair that nobody believed in them, who felt their lives were finished. I am not being melodramatic or sentimental when I say that in the private and confidential files of the foundation, we have examples of where our grants have saved the lives of artists. This does not mean for one minute that to get Pollock-Krasner grant one needs to have catastrophic emergencies. We are equally concerned about the normal vagaries of the artist's existence: time to work, money for studio rent, money for supplies and materials. These are as legitimate reasons for giving money as a devastating studio fire. I want to be very careful in emphasizing to your readers that we are not simply an emergency station where you apply when your life blows up. Not at all."

The fact that an artist is desperately hurting and critically needs money inspires the sympathy of the foundation, but if the merit isn't there, they can't help. Conversely, the world's greatest artist may apply, not show a financial need, and be rejected. Most of the interpretation of what is meant by that sparse phrase, "worthy and needy," was left to Krasner's two trusted advisors, Eugene Victor Thaw and Gerald Dickler, respectively the President and Chairman of the foundation's board. Thaw, a private art dealer respected internationally, is also a philanthropist, connoisseur, and co-author of the four-volume *catalogue raisonne* for the work of Jackson Pollock. Dickler, Krasner's attorney, had represented the estates of Stuart Davis, Georgia O'Keeffe, John Marin, and William Baziotes. He had also been a prominent lawyer in the Mark Rothko suit brought against the Marlborough Gallery and the trustees of the Rothko estate.

**B**ergman doesn't know if he would be sentimental enough to say that, since Pollock and Krasner were childless, her legacy was left metaphorically to support fellow artists who were economically or emotionally dependent. Certainly in the case of Mark Rothko, whose estate was scandalized by the manipulation of his

# THE POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION

dealer after his death, the issue of an artist's legacy requires special sensitivity. Rothko wrote his own epitaph in 1949, 30 years before he died: "A picture lives by companionship, expanding and quickening in the eyes of the observer. It dies by the same token. It is therefore a risky act to send it out into the world. How often it must be permanently impaired in the eyes of the unfeeling and the cruelty of the impotent who would extend their affliction universally."

**T**he trustees of The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Thaw and Dickler, knew Krasner intimately and understood her priorities. They function through a consensus of their awareness of how Krasner wished the foundation to operate. "They could fulfill her mandate because they knew her priorities," Bergman said. The foundation does not support film, video, photography or crafts, although in its early days it did award a few grants in some of these areas. Overwhelmed by thousands of applications from painters, sculptors, and graphic and mixed media artists, the foundation chose to narrow its focus to these four kinds of artists, the same ones that Krasner favored.

Since its inception in April, 1985, the foundation has awarded over 300 grants worth over three million dollars. Like the smaller Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation, established to aid older and mature artists, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation perpetuates many of the values of the original abstract expressionists, who lived in a time when there was a small, word of mouth, support system, much different from the current atmosphere in which many artists are obliged to become masters of self-promotion, running for president while a fellow artist handles the advertising. Even with all its money and power, the foundation retains the humanistic force of Krasner, who, an assistant to her dealer remarked, "did not forget where they came from." With her economic values formed by the Depression, the great irony, as Thaw has said, is that had Lee Krasner not been married to Jackson Pollock, with the ex-

penses and difficulties she had in her later years, she might be applying to the very foundation she created.

Bergman said he admires enormously the stamina of an artist who may have been rejected by other foundations, who may be hurt, discouraged, disconsolate, or depressed, yet will put his intimate private life in writing to seek help from the foundation. "We are not only sensitive to the confidentiality of what is said, we will not even reveal who got a Pollock-Krasner grant unless the artist gives us written permission." Their best grants, he added, have been made to artists who have come as referrals from other grantees, the result of one artist telling another to apply. "It's phenomenal," he said. "We'll give a grant and in 24 hours I'll get calls from four cities where artists have heard about the grant."

Through his work with the foundation, Bergman has come to know Krasner vicariously. He sees her through the eyes of Thaw and Dicker, as well as through two art dealers, Robert Miller and Jason McCoy, who manage the sale of Pollock's and Krasner's paintings. He notes that Jason McCoy, Jackson Pollock's nephew, was especially nurturing to Lee Krasner. McCoy, working in association with Thaw, is in charge of the Pollocks. The highly regarded Robert Miller was Krasner's dealer in her later years, and he continues to handle the foundation's Krasners.

**M**iller, who described Krasner as a "no-nonsense woman," took special trouble to search his files to provide *Provincetown Arts* with the one statement by the artist that epitomized the organic, self-enfolding quality of her work: "Painting, for me, when it really 'happens' is as miraculous as any natural phenomenon—as, say, a lettuce leaf. By 'happens,' I mean the painting in which the inner aspect of man and his outer aspects interlock. One could go on forever as to whether the paint should be thick or thin, whether to paint the woman or the square, hard-edge or soft, but after awhile such questions become a bore. They are merely problems in

esthetics, having only to do with the outer man. But the painting I have in mind transcends technique, transcends subject and moves into the realm of the inevitable —then you have the lettuce leaf."

In the foundation's recent annual report, illustrated with the work of numerous grantees, Eugene Thaw writes, "We make no critical claim for any overall level of achievement. Indeed, many of the objects and painted surfaces recorded here may well represent personal obsessions, emerging from the psyche of individual artists instead of the more prosaic search for some kind of truth understood by laymen. Certainly, for a long time now, not too many artists have consciously sought to send out into the world objects that used to be called 'beautiful.' In due course, time will reveal which, if any, of the artists whose careers were helped by Pollock-Krasner grants can be deemed masters—communicators of images which help those of us who are not artists, to understand our world more fully."

Since the inception of the foundation, Bergman has enjoyed a job that he says is the culmination of everything he could aspire to do with his life, creatively giving away money to individual artists, enriching the quality of life of people who in turn are enriching the quality of life for all of us. For Bergman, this is the ultimate privilege. "If you said to me, 'Wave a magic wand and choose any career,' it would be this." □□

*Christopher Busa is the son of the late abstract expressionist painter Peter Busa, one of the earliest grantees of The Pollock-Krasner Foundation.*

# *Building the Rose Dorothea*

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## By Josephine Del Deo

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Near sundown on a September day in 1975, I found myself musing on the fate of Provincetown as I drove down Commercial Street. At that time I was serving on the Historic District Study Committee which was laboring to create an historic district, and every building was alive to me, pulsing with its own individual message. The Provincetown Heritage Museum, then known as the Center for the Arts, had been converted from the Center Methodist Episcopal Church to the Chrysler Art Museum in 1958. This beautiful English Baroque structure, built in 1860, was proposed as a National Registered Landmark by the Provincetown Historical Association in 1974, but at that moment landmark registration had not yet been approved by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and the church/museum was threatened with foreclosure and possible destruction. As I came within sight of the building, I looked up at the belfry, and suddenly the rays of the setting sun came pouring through in a flood of blazing light. Within the structure, the whole sky seemed concentrated in a flare of mystical fire. The experience was so remarkable that it took my breath away, and I determined immediately that the building would be saved—not could be, but would be.

The next day my husband Salvatore and I met with Cyril Patrick, the president of the Provincetown Historical Association. We arranged to present to the selectmen a proposal to purchase the church and convert it to a town museum. Along with Joseph Lema and Adelaide Kenney, two ranking officers with many years of

faithful service to the town, we were appointed as the Committee for the Acquisition of the Center Methodist Church.

The five of us forged ahead, taking every rampart of doubt and clearing the field of opposition to the acquisition of the church as a municipal museum. Purchase was approved at a special town meeting in November, 1975, and the building was officially established as a museum at the regular town meeting in November, 1976. Our committee became the founding board of trustees.

Our first important action was to approach Captain Francis “Flyer” Santos, master shipbuilder, with the request that he undertake the construction of a half-scale model of the schooner *Rose Dorothea*, the most famous haddock schooner ever to sail out of Provincetown.

Flyer willingly accepted the challenge to build the world’s largest indoor model of a fishing schooner. After all, his grandfather, John Pavon Santos, had been a member of the crew of the *Rose Dorothea* in the Boston-Gloucester Fisherman’s Race during Old Home Week Celebration in 1907. The *Rose* had won that race, crossing the finish line with a broken foretopmast, and winning the Sir Thomas Lipton Cup, the largest trophy ever minted by Lipton.

For three generations, the men in Flyer’s family had been fishermen, first in the whaling trade and then aboard the Georges and Grand Banks schooners. Much of Flyer’s youth was spent listening to the oldtimers at Fertado’s Boatyard, originally Union Wharf, built in 1830, and the center of Provincetown’s busy fishing industry in the mid-19th century. By the 1930s, the whole property at 99 and 101 Commercial Street, directly opposite Flyer’s present home, was still very active as Fertado’s Boatyard. Amid the

## Shipbuilding

Half-scale model of the schooner *Rose Dorothea*, inside the Provincetown Heritage Museum



clamor of boatbuilding, accompanied by fishermen's talk, Flyer learned the skills of his trade.

Intended to be the centerpiece of the Heritage Museum, the indoor model of the *Rose Dorothea* is a stunning demonstration of those skills which made Provincetown a major fishing port. When she was finally completed, the model took on the appearance of a real schooner, not a representation of a ship, but the actual vessel ready to go to sea, the result of a true shipbuilder building a true ship and putting into her a realization of the elements required to fit her for seagoing voyage.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his essay "History," said, "The true poem is the poet's mind; the true ship is the shipbuilder." Between the initiation and the completion of this 12-year project, from the laying of the keel to the moment of christening, many dedicated individuals weathered many metaphorical storms, keeping on the course of completion, and making Emerson's insight interchangeable: "The true ship is the poet's mind; the true poem is the shipbuilder." Without the shared metaphor, the poem that is the ship would never have been built. We were each able to understand and apply both the daily pragmatism and the poetic vision necessary to recreate the *Rose Dorothea*. Flyer pursued his work with an almost religious intensity, and at the dedication ceremony on June 25, 1988, he remarked that he was continually made aware that the *Rose* was brought to life in a church. For each time the fulfillment of the project seemed doomed by lack of funds or helping hands, he was amazed to find exactly the needed resource, somehow, in answer to his prayers.

Incorporated in that faith were countless contributions of love, time, and money, particularly from the Provincetown His-

torical Association, which went the distance in providing financing for the schooner's construction.

Twenty years ago, on the occasion of the launching of his lovely sloop *Columbia*, I dedicated a poem to Flyer. Since then, I have come to believe that my words were intended prophetically for the *Rose Dorothea*, itself a poetic creation, whose identity had been exchanged with its maker:

The tools that lie in readiness, as if awake,  
Live by his summoning to make the dead oak  
quake beneath the quick and shivering sail.  
Nothing he keeps sleeps,  
But speaks the dialect he taught them —  
Ship's talk — to build a ship.

The man is true.  
Heart's keel beneath him,  
Balanced by work, he lives close to the wind.  
The ship he made, he launched, he loves, he sails.  
I cannot tell you more that needs my telling.

*Josephine Del Deo is the author of three volumes of poetry and a collection of Provincetown portraits, Compass Grass Anthology. The founding chairman of the Heritage Museum, she is co-curator of exhibitions with her husband, the painter Salvatore Del Deo.*



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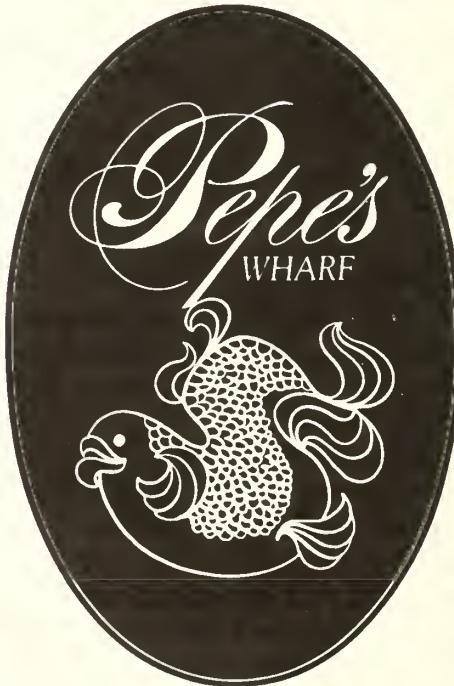
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## TASTING CAPE COD

Cooking, too, is an art, and in few places is this more evident than in Provincetown's diverse selection of restaurants. Influenced by the sea, the artists' community, and a Portuguese/Yankee heritage, Provincetown is today home to a wide range of eateries, each one indelibly stamped with an individual style and flavor. From elegant restaurants and sophisticated outdoor cafes to gourmet pizza take-outs and local bars featuring home-cooking, this town is unrivaled on the Cape in the quality and variety of its restaurants.

In Provincetown, there's a restaurant to fit everyone's desires and budget, but the secret is finding that special place. The following brief run-down on a sampling of what's available may help. *Bon appetit!*

— GILLIAN DRAKE

### WEST END

THE MOORS has been one of my favorites for 15 years. Embodying the basic charm of Provincetown, its beach-combed interior is a perfect setting for consistently excellent Portuguese and seafood specialties. Off-season, a roaring wood fire warms the dimly-lit restaurant, while opened hatches admit cooling sea breezes in summer. Spectacular cocktails—try the Scooter's Punch, garnished with a carnation. Always room to park.

For a special evening out, consider the RED INN. Dating from 1805, it's the only country inn in New England directly on the waterfront. Good food, a breathtaking view of Long Point, and plenty of parking. Cozy Tavern with roaring log fire in winter (it's open year-round), where a moderately-priced lighter fare menu is available.

In a converted barn on a knoll overlooking marsh and ponds on Shank Painter Road is WEATHERING HEIGHTS. Great steaks, fresh seafood and hearty portions. A good place to take a large party. Ample parking.

SAL'S PLACE, named after former owner Sal Del Deo, a popular local painter, undergoes a change of ownership this year. This family-run restaurant on the water is renowned for its generous portions of provincial Italian cuisine, particularly Sal's squid stew (best in town.) New owners Jack and Lora Papetsas plan to carry on Sal's legacy to Provincetown's culinary lore. Waterfront open-air dining on the deck in summer. About a 10 minute walk from Town center; parking can be difficult.

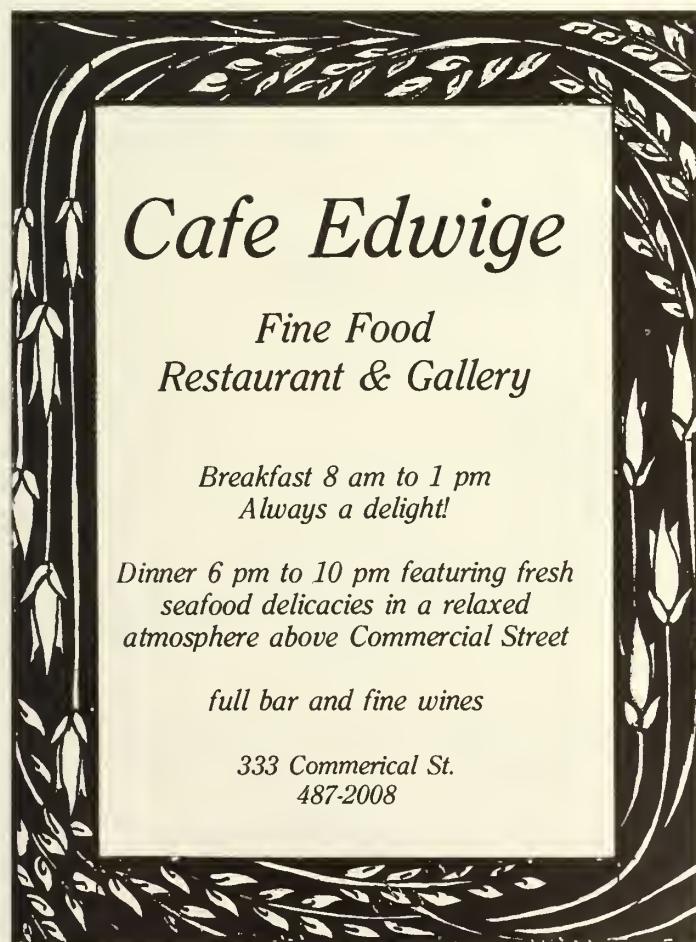
For the best deal in town, go to the Harbor-view restaurant at the family-owned PRO-

VINCETOWN INN, located on the beach at the exact spot where the Pilgrims first landed. For \$10.95 you'll get a full dinner special featuring roast beef, available from 6 to 9 p.m. Also Happy Hour in the bar with live entertainment. Always a place to park.

### EAST END

PUCCI'S is where east-enders hang-out, the perfect spot for an idle brunch or romantic dinner. With a fabulous view from the large enclosed deck right on the water, Pucci's serves light fare all day, and dinner specials at night. Famous for its chicken wings, best in town. Moderately priced. Limited parking, about a 15 minute walk from town center.

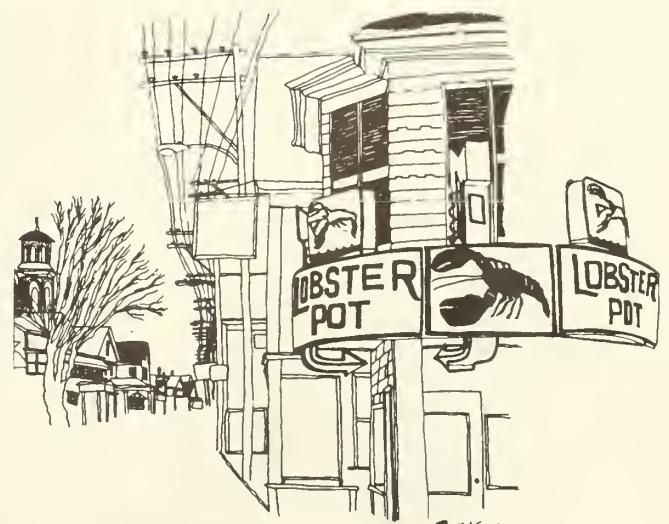
CIRO & SAL'S is Provincetown's best-known restaurant, and deservedly so. (Yes, Ciro and Sal, both painters, were once part-



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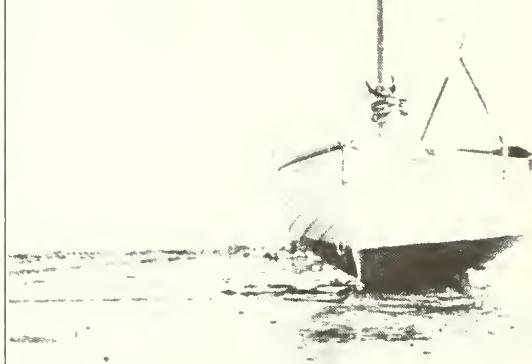
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LUNCH • DINNER

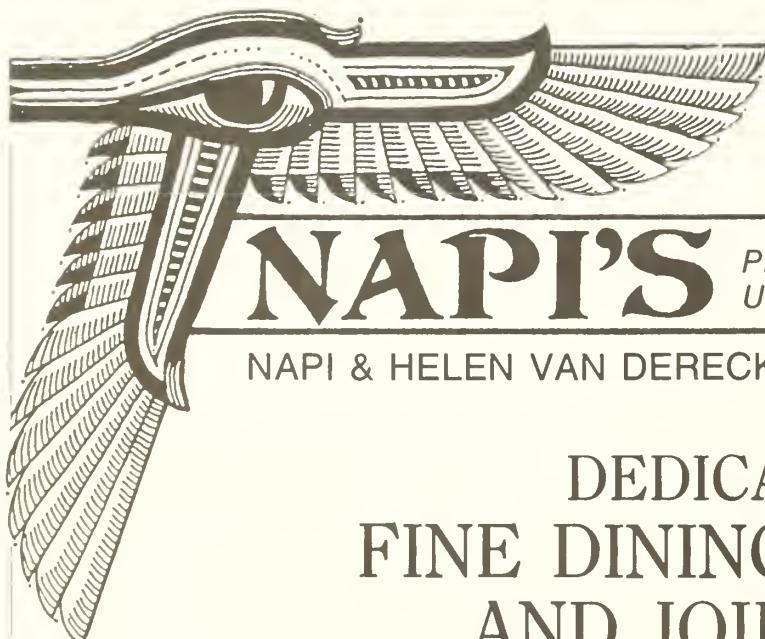
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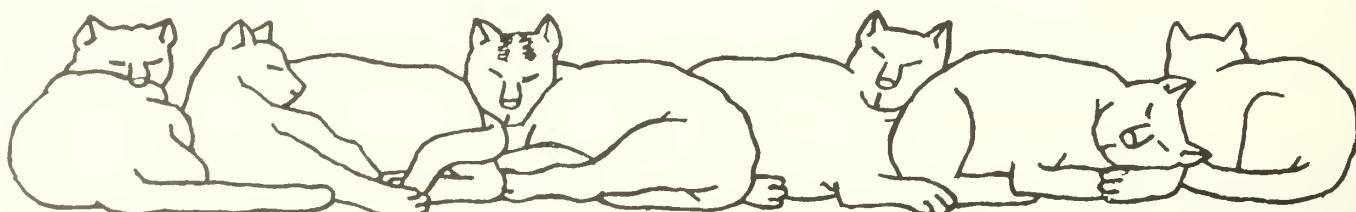


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ners.) A romantic brick-walled cellar hung with straw-clad Chianti bottles, Ciro's kitchen regularly turns out delicious Northern Italian dishes which are unlike anything you may have had at the average Italian/American restaurant. Open all year, Ciro's is heavily booked on weekends, but the wait (usually in the lively bar upstairs) is all part of the experience. Parking difficult, about a 10 minute walk from town center.

Across the street shaded by pink awnings is FRANCO'S, a restaurant which has taken Provincetown by storm since its opening in this new location last year. The creation of well-known chef Franco Palumbo, this restaurant reflects his character and taste both in decor and the food he serves. A sophisticated exercise in black and chrome, the interior is designed around Franco's personal art deco collection. Superb food, no-holds-barred on the no-nos—forget calorie counting. Lunch and dinner served on the outdoor deck right on the beach. Tallulah's bar is upstairs—Noreen serves great cocktails. A fun place—should be the late-night spot this summer.

THE FLAGSHIP is another water-front favorite. This romantic restaurant is one of Provincetown's oldest. Its simple, unadulterated, wood-varnished interior evokes a Provincetown that is no more. Roaring wood fire in cooler months. A very special place.

Just across the Provincetown/Truro line at the Sandcastle resort is PRONTO, a friendly Italian restaurant guaranteed to "make linguine lovers smile." A popular place with locals, Pronto features an antipasto salad bar and nightly blackboard specials. Early dinner specials before 6:30 for \$10.95. Plenty of parking.

Further down Route 6A on Beach Point is PAPARAZZI, a casual beach-front restaurant serving pizza, Italian specialties, seafood, prime rib and lobster; also a wide selection of appetizers and snacks, and a bounteous salad bar. Ample parking.

#### TOWN CENTER

The MEWS and PEPE'S, two elegant beach-front restaurants flanking the Johnson Street parking lot, both offer distinctive dining on former wharves from Provincetown's seafaring past. At the MEWS, the impeccable taste of owner Ron Robin (you may recognise his name as a Boston DJ) is evident in the decor, the choice of menu items, and luscious displays of fresh flowers. PEPE'S, owned and operated by the Berg family, has a nautical flavor and is renowned for its fine seafood. Enjoy lunch or dinner on the spacious deck overlooking the beach.

CAFE EDWIGE is a delightful little restaurant/gallery specializing in whole foods served in a laid-back atmosphere reminiscent

of the '70s. Brunch at Edwige is legendary and can be enjoyed on a tiny flower-filled outdoor patio, or in the breezy high-ceilinged dining room which overlooks the activity on Commercial Street below. Downstairs is DODIE'S PIZZA, great for real Italian pizza and take-out specialties such as stuffed artichokes and eggplant parmigian. A few tables to enjoy the food there, or take it to the beach just around the corner.

Look across the street and you'll see Freeman Street next to the Library. Go down here to find NAPI'S, Provincetown's most unusual restaurant. Run by local personality Napi Van Dereck and his wife Helen, Napi's is renowned for first-class food using only the freshest ingredients. Extensive menu with vegetarian section, Middle-Eastern specialties and excellent fresh seafood. Feast your eyes on the decor—paintings, artifacts, pottery, sculpture, flotsam, plants and a couple of friendly cats looking for fish scraps. Open year round, for dinner only in the summer, breakfast and lunch also in the off-season. A favorite hang-out with locals.

For fresh seafood and lobster, the place to go is the LOBSTER POT. Right on the beach, with a panoramic view of the fishing boats unloading their catch on MacMillan Wharf, the Lobster Pot features traditional clambakes, delicious Portuguese specialties, and the widest range of seafood available in town. Owned and managed by Joy McNulty and her

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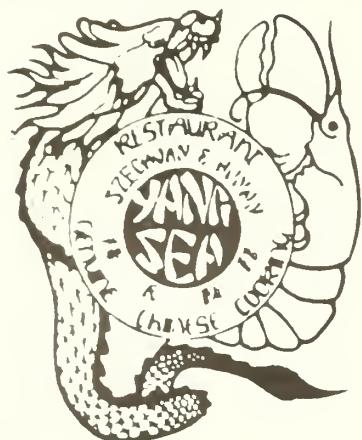
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family, the Lobster Pot is well-run and moderately priced. A bonus is the friendly, energetic staff and warm family atmosphere. Arrive early as there's often a waiting line in the summer. Park at Town Wharf.

FAT JACK'S, formerly the infamous Foc'sle Bar, is a an attractive and comfortable cafe and bar serving delicious nightly specials and light fare. Excellent value. Window tables good for people watching.

Across the street you'll notice the pink and blue umbrellas and colorful window boxes of CAFE BLASE, Provincetown's largest outdoor cafe. Modeled after a Parisian cafe, the Blase serves a cafe menu from breakfast to late night featuring burgers, quiches, sandwiches and desserts with a French flavor. A wide selection of imported beer; wine and champagne available by the glass. A place to see and be seen; the perfect spot for breakfast, lunch and late night snacks, and for watching the July 4th parade.

Last year, the EURO CAFE was *the* place for the late night crowd. This summer, after undergoing extensive renovations, the Euro will be extending its hours and serving light fare on a new second-floor outdoor cafe overlooking Commercial Street. Located in the heart of Provincetown right next to Town Hall, the Euro's Caribbean-flavored Island Grille occupies the vaulting interior of a converted church and former cinema. Promises to be an exciting scene this summer.

Across the street, right opposite Town Hall, is the YANG SEA, Provincetown's only Chinese restaurant. Open all year, the Yang Sea serves dinner and moderately-priced lunch specials. No monosodium glutamate used, and brown rice is available with all meals.

Down Commercial Street past the historic Universalist Church is FRONT STREET, Provincetown's first sophisticated restaurant, founded 15 years ago by Edmond DiStasi and Howard Gruber. Serving classical dishes with Italian overtones, present owner and chef Donna Aliperti is carrying on the tradition of one of Provincetown's best-loved restaurants. Ask to be seated at a booth in this romantic dimly-lit brick cellar of a former Provincetown museum. Park in Grace Hall lot and walk through Masonic Place.

Next door is VORELLI'S, a lively restaurant reminiscent of a European cafe, with a bar along one side. Good appetizers and snacks, fresh seafood and Italian specialties. Window tables are great for people watching.

Past the Post Office on the waterfront is SEBASTIAN'S LONG & NARROW, a small and attractively designed restaurant with a panoramic view of the harbor. Efficient service, moderately priced.

Nearby at the Boatslip resort, Provincetown's beach-front gay hot-spot and home of the "tea dance", is the Boatslip Restaurant. Situated on the second floor, the restaurant occupies an elegant space and is a

little more restrained than its lively surroundings might indicate. Caters to a mixed crowd, and features the cuisine of local chef Lorraine Najar, famous for her Mexican nights. Under the new management this year of Bill Johnson and Tommy Singer. Perfect view of Long Point; limited parking.

A block to the west of the Boatslip you'll find ANNA ANNA ANNA at her new location this year at the former Cottage Restaurant. Serving "the world's best food", Anna's restaurant is well worth a special trip down here—about a 10 minute walk from town center.

A little further down Commercial Street is GALLERANI'S, formerly Cookie's Tap, a brightly decorated cafe run by Barry Barnes and David Gallerani serving breakfast, lunch, dinner and late night snacks. Imaginative food, lively atmosphere.

#### FAST FOOD . . .

MOJO'S has the best fast food in town; moreover, it's *real* food. Fresh seafood, genuine potato French fries (with skins on), hummus salad, batter-fried mushrooms, tasty burgers. Feast at sun-shaded outdoor tables or take your food across to the beach and watch the fishing boats come and go.

SPIRITUS PIZZA is very popular with the late-night crowd and has gained a reputation as a gathering place after the bars close. It's also open all day long for excellent pizza and

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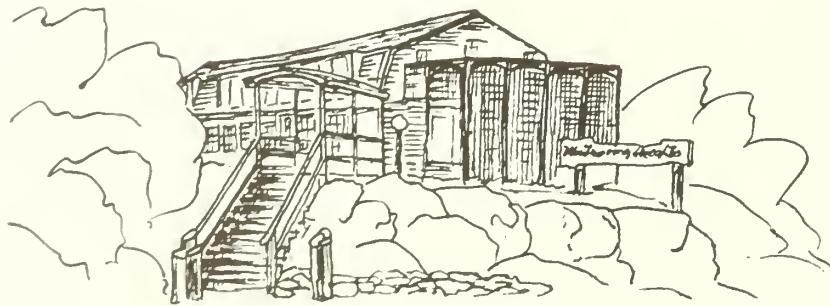
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#### CAFES

PEARL'S CAFE, east of Town center, is a cheerful spot for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Owner Sally Deiterich serves a light fare menu all day—wings, nachos, omelettes, and sandwiches—at affordable prices. Pleasant little out-door patio on Commercial Street.

Both MAZELTOV and CAFE EXPRESS, near the Post Office, are friendly cafes serving a limited menu all day. There are a few outdoor tables at Cafe Express to drink your cappuccino, read the papers and greet your friends picking up their mail.

#### WHERE THE NATIVES EAT . . .

THE MAYFLOWER CAFE, right in the center of town on Commercial Street, is family owned and run and serves delicious home-cooked food and Portuguese specialties at very affordable prices. Great place to take the family. Good burgers, pizza, and sandwiches, too.

Just down the street opposite Town Hall is STORMY HARBOR, owned by a local Portuguese family. A no-nonsense place serving home-cooked specialties and fresh seafood. Good for breakfast.

On Bradford Street is TIP FOR TOPS'N, open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and

featuring Portuguese specialties at moderate prices. Try flippers (deep-fried Portuguese bread dough) for breakfast, a real Provincetown treat. And on Shank Painter Road, you'll find DAIRY LAND, the best place to take the family for lobster-in-the-rough, steamed clams and fresh fish lunch specials. Hamburgers and ice cream too. Plenty of parking.

#### OUT OF TOWN

On Route 6 in North Truro is the WHITMAN HOUSE, known for its sizzling charcoal-broiled steaks and fresh seafood, especially "beef and reef" combinations. A comfortable restaurant exuding old-fashioned charm, the Whitman House has been run by the Rice family for many years. Reasonabley priced.

The charming BLACKSMITH SHOP near the banks of the Pamet River in Truro Center has been a favorite with Truro residents and summer visitors for many years. Chef Warren Falkenburg serves a diverse selection of inventive dishes, including vegetarian and fresh seafood. A pleasant place to meet friends for drinking and dining. The decor features Warren's hand-made miniature dollhouses, painted by his wife Rudelle in the Peter Hunt style; occasionally one may be for sale. Open all year.

The Inn at Duck Creek is a delightful country setting for SWEET SEASONS restaurant. The dining room overlooks the duck pond, complete with domestic and wild ducks. Im-

aginative cooking and an elegant summer atmosphere make Sweet Seasons a special place to visit. Also the Tavern upstairs featuring lighter fare and live entertainment. A fun spot.

AESOP'S TABLES, owned and operated by Brian Dunne and his artist wife Kim Kettler, is located in a former sea captain's home right next to Town Hall on Main Street. A lovely country house atmosphere featuring "artful dining and fine spirits". Renowned for fabulous desserts. Try the cozy "parlor" upstairs for light snacks and cocktails. Hand-made paper collages by Kettler are on display at the restaurant.

CIELO, just over the hill on Commercial Street, is a unique restaurant serving a prix fixe meal by reservation only. Inventive cuisine, exquisitely prepared and presented; amidst stylish surroundings featuring the owners' art collection. In an old Wellfleet saltbox overlooking the salt marsh.

Across the street is the WELLFLEET OYSTER HOUSE, a Wellfleet institution owned and run by Tony Costello, a character with a fascinating background. Great seafood and Italian specialties, genuine Cape Cod atmosphere.

Down Route 6 next to the Wellfleet Cinemas and Wellfleet Flea Market is FAMOUS TANG'S Chinese restaurant. Good oriental food at modest prices; great for lunch after doing the Flea Market, or dinner before the movie. Plenty of parking. ■

*Robert Levey, The Boston Globe*

**On Exhibit: The collages of KIM VICTORIA KETTLER shown: "Somehow Meant To Be" 40" x 15", 1989**

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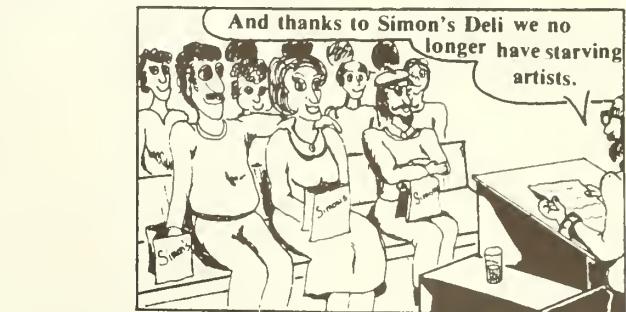
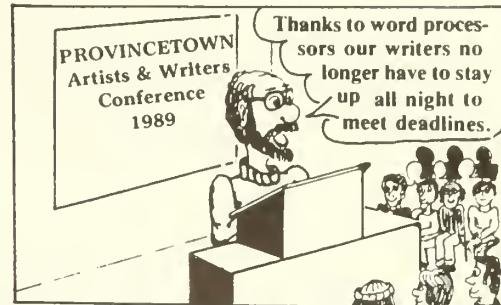


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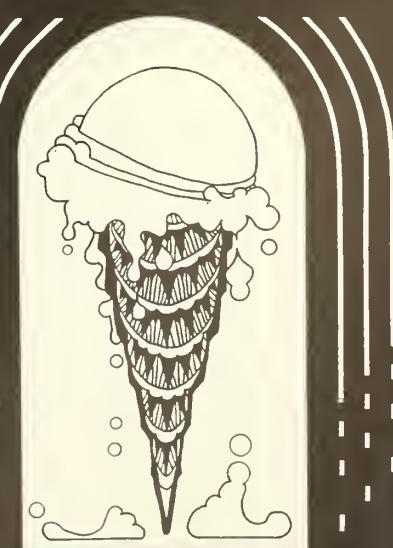


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# CANNIBALS

By Charlotte Kirsch Jerace

Every July Daddy got in bed with the shakes, and Mumma said that it was the Malaria comin' back again with the rest of the bugs. So every summer, right after we'd go out to the bandstand and watch the fireworks on the fourth of July, we'd kinda wait around, hopin' not but knowin' that in a week or two, no matter how good he was feelin', laughin' and carrying on, the Malaria would come to the corner of Birch and Pearl, and find Daddy. It'd put him down with a frightful power, heatin' him up and shakin' him so, drenchin' the four poster with a godawful sweat. 'Bout all he'd say to anyone was "Mumma, shut the window and pull the drapes so I can sweat it out." Then Mumma would shuffle over to the window without sayin' a word out loud, drop her head like she was prayin' and she'd shut the window, untie the pullbacks and let the room heat up 'til it was stiflin'. Daddy would just lie there in black and maroon checkered pajams, laughin' quietly, 'cept once in awhile when he'd howl at some joke that passed through his burnin' brain.

When the Malaria came, we'd take turns peekin' in to that dark, dank room with the dusty rose and white flowered wallpaper, to see what he needed, or what was so funny. Mumma said his laughin' irked her some, bein's that she had to change the sheets three times a day and the mangler was always on the fritz. For two

whole weeks the only thing he'd say to me is "Mary, go to the Dairy Queen to get me a vanilla milkshake" and he'd hand me a quarter from the stack he kept on the pile of newspaper next to the bed, just for this purpose. I'd run like hell to keep it cold as I could, then sit there amazin' while Daddy would suck it straight down, then open his mouth to let the steam out, such was his fire.

'Bout two weeks later, Daddy would rise from the bed like a bear after winter, put on his workclothes which would have gotten loose in the waist, and he'd get in his Ford and go head for the pier. Mumma would air out the room, includin' the mattress, and say "This time was worse than the last time." She said that eighteen times that I remember.

Sister Gina called Daddy "Moosie." Don't know why 'cept he was big and brown haired all over, with soft, kind eyes. He swum like a fish, Mumma said. Always cuttin' through the water smooth as a seal on his way to the old rotten float. I could never beat him there, never. When his muscles got goin' there was no stoppin' Daddy, whether he was shovelin' snow or haulin' nets. "Brute strength," Mumma would say. "Strong as an ox," Gramma would agree, and so would I when he gave me a crusher hug once in a real while. He was a farm boy, raised big 'n tall in the State O' Maine, by folks who ate what they grew, and that's why.

I first saw Daddy when he came back from the war. He was totin' a big straw bag that said Port Mor eby. That bag had the best of everything stuck inside, all for me. Every Saturday, after comin' home from the Roy Rogers double feature, I'd get all dolled up in

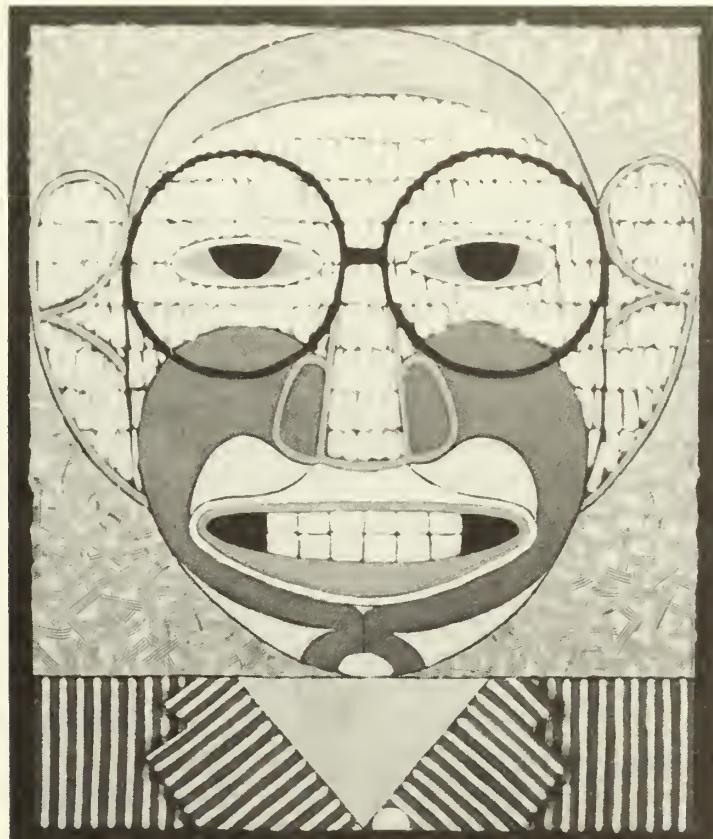
## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

my hula skirt made of white parachute silk, which I'd put on over my slacks to ward off the cold and mice out in the shed. With the skirt I wore a bracelet Daddy made specially for me by folding back the sides of a cereal number from a Jap plane he shot down when

he was stationed in New Ginny. No one, but no one had such a snazzy bracelet, and the kids used to offer me all sorts of things in trade, but I never would. Instead, I would sit in my hula skirt and look at Daddy's maroon velvet picture album, stealin' peeks at the hootchie kootchie native girls that walked around in grass skirts with their titties showin', girls that hung out near the base.

I went lookin' for that bracelet and hula skirt just the other day, but somehow it wasn't where it was supposed to be, just like Daddy wasn't.

I'll never forget my eighteenth birthday 'cause that's when I got a pink mohair sweater and that's when Daddy's leg first went out from under him, landin' him square in the middle of the kitchen linoleum. Mumma said, "Jack, the cake will fall!" Then later when he said his leg felt weak, she took him to the VA doctor who said maybe he'd had a stroke, or maybe he had MS, bein's that he was 'bout the right age and all. From that day on it was like Daddy slid down a mountain, and no doctor or saint could stop him.



Mumma started babyin' him, while Sister Gina and Sister Tammie tried to be normal kids, paperin' their walls with Beatles this and Beatles that. Me, I swapped my Elvis is a Doll sweater for the letter jacket of a good lookin' local boy, and started fillin' the Lane

Cedar-lined hope chest he gave me before he went to boot camp.

Skipper came back from Nam different from when he left, still good lookin' and smellin' of Old Spice, but quieter and restless. We got married at the VFW hall, I, in Mumma's gown, Sister Gina and Sister Tammie in hot pink velveteen, and Daddy in a wheelchair with a broken brake that let go just as we were sayin' I dos. Skipper and I took a honeymoon trip to Nova Scotia, sidetracked down to Boston on the way back, and decided to stay in the Big City, "Cast our fate to the wind," Skipper said.

Once a month I'd hop the Trailways and knit all the way home, cravin' Mumma's fishchowda and homemade bread, as I already had one in the oven. Each time I'd go home Daddy was feelin' poorer and poorer, and he talked funny. Slow like, like he was drunk, 'cept he never touched a drop due to what the Malaria had already done to his liver. Mumma wasn't takin' this too well, specially when the bank called and said his deposit wasn't totalin' to what he said it should. His boss came over and said, "Jack,

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

you're makin' simple errors in math." Daddy spread this odd grin across his nice teeth and laughed, even when they fired him.

Four years after my eighteenth birthday we buried Daddy in the old cemetery out by the woods. He was laid to rest in a double plot, surrounded by other downeastas who'd made their way to Heaven. He was 46 years old when he died. Couldn't walk nor talk nor do nothin', 'cept when I told him a joke he would laugh. He never got to know his grandson the way he'd planned all his life to teach the ropes to any boy born into the family. The VA doctors said he didn't suffer, didn't even know what was goin' on the last few years 'cause his brain didn't work no more. Mumma didn't agree but she said nothin' because she was brought up to respect people with lots of education, particularly doctors.

"So what did he have?" I asked the doctor from the VA, "I'd sure like to know what killed my Daddy."

"Don't know, that's why we did the autopsy" said the man with the pimply face who sucked on his pipe like it was attached to a woman's breast.

"Just when will you know?" I asked, pretending to be intelligent.

"Sent it off to the Harvard Medical School. We'll have to wait and see," he answered. And then as God could strike me dead he said, "Looks to me like a family disease. You're safe because you're a girl—only strikes the men in the family."

"Family disease?" I asked feelin' my heart burst through my blouse, thinkin' of my baby boy. "I'll have you know my uncle Jake was killed in Germany, and my uncle Joe has Lou Gehrig's disease."

"The symptoms are similar, you know" he said wishing I'd stop bein' such a pain in the ass and leave.

"They are like Hell!" I yelled, feelin' shame creep over me like someone breakin' an egg on the top of my head.

"It could have been somethin' they ate," he said, standin' up, "somethin' they ate at the farm, or the fertilizer, who knows." He opened the door, tryin' to sweep me out, and I left, givin' him the evil eye, tryin' to silence the lies on his tongue.

When the autopsy report did come, two years later, we had to take it to a doctor to have it explained. We were in for a shock

'cause they said Daddy's liver didn't show no signs of the Malaria. No, they said, he didn't ever have the Malaria, and really they didn't know for sure what Daddy had, so instead they claimed that it was an undiagnosed family disease, somethin' like "Jakob Creutsfeld disease." Even our doctor didn't know what that was, just said it was rare, nothin' to bother about. "Better to let it rest," he said. Mumma agreed. She'd had it, as you could rightly expect.

Years later, ten to be exact, Skipper wasn't doin' so hot, and our little one turned out to be sickly, so to get out of the house, and pay down the car, I got me a job, waitin' tables at the Harvard Club of Boston. This was a members only kind of place, mostly rich folks, though you couldn't tell it by the clothes they wore.

Right after Thanksgiving, as I was about to slide on home with my free 20 pound turkey, one of the members asked me if I'd like to earn a little extra for Christmas by workin' for his wife, servin' dinner at their party, comin' up soon. Lots of folk from the club came to the party, includin' a Dr. Jessup, who was talkin' real excited about his friend Dan, who'd won the Nobel Prize. Even I knew what that meant. Seems like Dan had found a new disease, as if we didn't have enough already, and it had a funny name—Kuru. Found it in New Ginny, eatin' away on a bunch of cannibals!

Later on when I was servin' Dr. Jessup his roast beef with juice, I whispered politely to him, "It may be that my Daddy had Kuru."

Dr. Jessup looked up from his garden salad and said, "He couldn't have, Mary, only cannibals have Kuru." Some people laughed, makin' my face turn beetred, but I had this feelin' down in my pit, that Daddy had died of Kuru. All while I was doin' the dishes and vacuumin', right on past midnight when I had my hat and coat on, I kept thinkin' bout Daddy. Even as I was foldin' up the new hundred dollar bill I'd been paid, somethin' started eatin' on me that Kuru killed my Daddy, and I set out to prove it.

Bein's that I had a Harvard ID badge, I could go anywhere in the whole school, includin' the Countway Medical Library, so one snowy day a few weeks later, I popped in after work. One of the gentlemen from the Club saw me starin' at all these metal drawers and offered to help me, no questions asked. It took him no time at all to get me books on Kuru, and best of all, he gave me copies of

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Dr. Dan's notebooks, written in his own neat penmanship. Dr. Dan's notebooks were easy to read, like a story. He went through the jungle. He found the Fore village. He knew he was there 'cause he heard the unmistakable laughter—Kuru. He named the thing Kuru 'cause it means laughin' in Fore. My heart started poundin' and I had to take a wicked leak, but I didn't dare leave my seat lest someone would think I was through and take the notebooks away. And I didn't dare take them to the toilet 'cause someone might think I stole them. So I kept goin' and what I found stopped me short for a minute.

Dr. Dan started sayin' that they got the Kuru from eatin' diseased human brain. A memory came jumpin' into my head and it got me so excited I nearly screamed out loud. You see, my Daddy had eaten human brain too! I knew this because one day when Mumma's rich Uncle Pete (the potato farmer who made it big) came back from a cruise, he gave me a souvenir menu which had a pretty picture on the front—native girls, sorta like the hootchie kootchies. Inside was the food, written out real fancy, and I'll never forget sayin' "I'm gonna barf, Daddy, who would eat calf brains on toast?" And Daddy told me that one time by accident, he had eaten HUMAN BRAIN with the natives in the jungle! Seems like the natives invited him to a party 'cause him and the other GIs were so nice to them. The guys gave them Hershey bars and they returned the favor by invitin' them to a celebration in their village.

With all the dimes I had I made copies of the pages, includin' the description of the Fore brains Dr. Dan had looked at under a microscope. Skipper went out to the Used Book store and found me a fine medical dictionary, and I started makin' lists of things that were alike. Things like spongeform, laughter, things like that. When I told Mumma she said we should go to the VA and maybe she could get a pension seein's that his death was service connected and damn if this didn't prove it. Besides, she told the VA doctors over and over that he was never the same after the war. He knew it had done more to him than just scare him shitless.

So I went to the VA with my lists, and I even brought pictures from the maroon velvet photo album showin' Daddy and his friends with the Fore natives, includin' the bare-chested Hootchie

Kootchie girls, I might add. The VA said no way. Dr. Dan's book said only Fore get Kuru, no Caucasian (white man) had ever had it. I said that it wasn't Dr. Dan's fault that he didn't know about Port Mor eby and my Daddy, and someone laughed right in my face. Still, I had 'em and they knew I knew it 'specially when I said, "You know my Daddy had a service-connected disease and that's why you keep slides of his brain in the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. ARMED FORCES INSTITUTE, GET THAT?"

Mumma dug her nails into my arm, pullin' me away, hushin' me up and tellin' me that she didn't raise me to yell like a fishwife, so I left feelin' helpless, as is usual in our family.

As you probably guessed, Mumma didn't get a pension and still she gets by okay. Now I am 46 years old, same age as Daddy when he died and I don't have a sign of it, don't drag my leg or talk like I was drunk. I do laugh, though. I laugh because you've got to just to get through this world.

Today is Memorial Day and I'll go stand on Commercial Street and watch the parade like I have since I was little, watchin' the Veterans of Foreign Wars march by. I expect tears will ruin my makeup when I think of Daddy, marchin' so straight and tall in his uniform, those Bronze and Silver Stars shinin' bright as the point on the flagpole, 'twas his honor to bear. My Daddy died a hero and I want you to remember him this day as one of the casualties of WWII. Me an' my family, well you could say we're casualties of cannibals and bureaucrats. Sometimes it just takes a little longer to die. □□

*Charlotte Kirsch Jerace lives yearround in Truro, Massachusetts. She is Director of Employee Communications Consulting at KPMG Peat Marwick, Boston. Her film, "Elements," shot on location in Truro and Provincetown, won a 1989 International Telly Award for excellence in corporate communications. Until recently, she has written non-fiction only. Facing the Future was published by Doubleday, Penguin and Robert Hale, Ltd. Currently, she is writing a novel set on the Outer Cape.*

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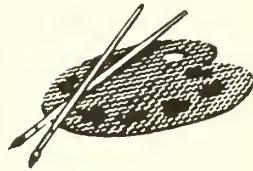
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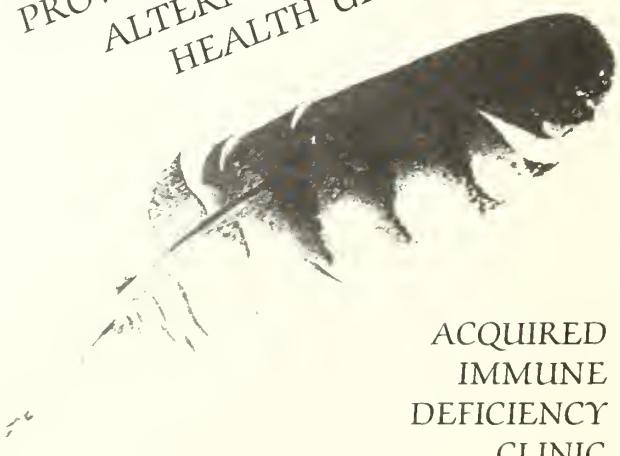


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## KARL KNATHS

(continued from page 59)

agree to buy 40 of them a year at \$1800 each. The bank ended up with a couple hundred thousand dollars in the Knaths estate. The price tag from Rosenberg was on the back, which helped sell the pictures. The cheapest picture was \$7000, and they went up to \$14,000. The most I ever got for one was \$2400. I made \$600 a picture." Shein, a former competitive athlete, is fond of letter ratings. "Of the 125 Knaths that I had, I sold 25 Bs and no As," Shein explained, but added that there were a number of A paintings by Knaths, and that if one comes to market, he would be willing to pay up to \$25,000 for one (in 1983 dollars).

Prior to his involvement with the Knaths estate, Shein had handled the estate of Gerrit Beneker in conjunction with the Vose Gallery. "We found a number of rich people who were looking for a tax write-off," he said in discussing the Beneker estate, "and who like to donate paintings. For that reason, a number of Benekers went to the Brockton Art Museum." In a similar arrangement with his clients, many works by Knaths were given primarily to the Brockton Art Museum as well as to the Danforth Museum of Art.

From a business point of view, it is understandable that the bank wanted to get out of the art business. These and other actions have not proved to be in the best interest of the artist's posthumous artistic reputation. Dumping 125 mostly minor paintings on the market certainly tends to depress the sales for better paintings by the same artist. The bottoming-out of the artist's resale value sadly paralleled his critical bashing. Also, the total and complete liquidation of the work meant that there have been few dealers, collectors, curators, or critics thus far to champion the work. Until Knaths finds a new level of critical and market attention, the stakes are simply too low to entice major players.

A singular exception to this bleak prognosis was an exhibition held in 1982 at the Milton and Sally Avery Center for the Arts at Bard College, curated by the collectors Jean and Jim Young, who bought several paintings from Shein, in addition

to works purchased directly from the artist. The Avery Center director, Linda Weintraub, visited the Archives of American Art, and working with Knaths' handwritten and illustrated manuscript, published his *Ornament and Glory* which set forth some of his esthetic theory. Weintraub also borrowed major works to augment the seven paintings, 86 works on paper, and six studio charts from the Young collection.

After the estate had been rather well picked through, the remaining notebooks and documents were acquired by the Archives of American Art through its Boston director, Robert Brown. Saleable drawings and pages of notebooks had been pulled out of context by the executors and stamped with the estate stamp usually somewhere on the image. Many of these callously handled works have surfaced at charity auctions, and it always sends chills up my spine to see that heavy-handed stamp. While pulling apart Knaths' papers may have produced more income for the estate, it made a shambles of attempts for serious research. Examining the rolls of microfilm in the Boston office of the AAA, I observed that the badly photographed images are virtually unreadable in many cases and reflect a completely random order of materials. This is yet another reflection of the estate's decision to get out of the art business, the business that, ironically, Knaths had pursued for his entire adult life.

Sal del Deo had been a friend and neighbor for many years. When he learned that paintings were being sold at the bank, he was shocked at what he found. "What appalled me is that they had been placed all over the bank. They had amateur easels that are like triangles. They had large paintings resting against the tripods so that they bowed. I was so angry I took the paintings off the easels." When a bank officer inquired as to what he was doing, del Deo replied, "You're throwing these paintings around here, helter skelter, and expecting these things to survive. This is a travesty."

The painter Judith Rothschild, who was very close to Knaths, has often re-

marked to me when such details are brought up, "Typical Knaths luck." It leaves one feeling a sense of injustice and that Karl Knaths, one of Provincetown's most distinguished first-generation modernists, deserves better than this. □□

Charles Giuliano is Boston correspondent for Art News and an editor of Art New England.



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## LEWIS BERGMAN

(continued from page 43)

memorial services of close friends. East Hampton, where we had summered before Provincetown and where we have returned since, was also where we went for those gloomy events, starting with Jackson Pollock's funeral in the summer of 1956 and Frank O'Hara's almost exactly ten years later. It never occurred to us that, after leaving Provincetown, our next trip here would be for Fritz Bultman's funeral in 1985, and then, in much too rapid succession, for Myron Stout's memorial service last year—after which Chris Busa wrote chillingly to me, "next summer and another death (whose?)"—and now Lewis's.

The loss of three very close friends, in as many years, is no fun. Of the three, Abby and I had known Lewis the longest, and yet we don't remember exactly how we met. Probably with the Staffords in the mid-fifties, surely in New York City, and surely outside the art world. Soon after our reunion in Provincetown, Lewis became editor of the *New York Times Magazine* and remained in that job until 1975, after which he worked for about seven years as editor of *across the board*. So, almost until the end of our years together, he was a newspaperman and an editor. It was his sense of his profession, of his interest in life as an ongoing news story, that made him stimulating to be with and to work with. And it was entirely appropriate that, a month ago at his funeral, the major eulogies—really reminiscences—were given by colleagues at the *Times*, all of whom recognized Lewis's keen intelligence, his wit, his desire for clarity and order and, conversely, his abhorrence of pieties and fuzzy generalizations.

It didn't matter what Lewis was doing or reading, he always saw stories—in scientific journals, in art magazines, in private and public events, everywhere. One time we were talking to a mutual friend who is a top bridge player, and the friend argued that not only had there never been a first-rate woman player but that there never would be. Lewis's eyes lighted up. "How about an article?" he asked. "Could you support your position?" And then the clincher: "specifically?" Our friend never

wrote the article. And, unfortunately, while Lewis was on the *Times*, I never wrote for him either. The closest I came was a discussion about a piece on Norman Mailer's fiftieth birthday party in 1973. However, immediately after the event, which was quickly and widely covered in newspapers and weeklies, Lewis killed the assignment with a single word, "overexposed."

Three years later, as editor of *across the board*, and eager to lift the cultural tone of what amounted to the industrial Conference Board's house organ, Lewis implored me to write a book review for him. I said, "I'm not qualified to write on economics."

"This is a novel," he replied, "Muriel Spark's *The Takeover*. A mixture of Greek mythology and contemporary business. Your meat." He waited for me to say yes. He continued to wait. "It's short and we pay well."

"How well?"

"Five hundred. For, say, between 500 and 1500 words." I said yes, read the book, and turned in two typed pages. After a few days he called. "I don't know how you did it," he said. "Exactly 500 words. A dollar a word. The most I've ever paid."

In retrospect, I wish I'd written for him again. And I wish I could once again listen to his Indian-dialect description of Med Vehta at a cocktail party groping for caviar and women's breasts. I wish we were drinking screwdrivers together. I wish I could hear him insist on fresh orange juice. I wish we were eating lobster *a l'americaine* that he prepared so professionally. I wish we could trade jokes, as we did at the funeral of Harvey Breit: "I'll speak at your funeral if you'll speak at mine." Perhaps most of all, now, in the gloom of remembering not only Lewis but Fifi and Monica, I wish that the next time I come to Provincetown, it will be for a wedding. Meanwhile, I can only hope that Marybeth, Eliza, and Nick will find here what Lewis would have wanted for them: fun.

*B. H. Friedman is the author of seven novels, several monographs on artists, and the biography Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible.*

### Harvey Shapiro

It's very jolting to come directly from the offices of the *Magazine*, where Lewis spent so much of his life, to say goodbye to him in Provincetown. I met Lewis at the *Times* in 1957. It was a very different world then—I sat in the large open room on the eighth floor with Charlie Palmer and his green eyeshade, an urbane man and an urbane writer; a character named the "swamp fox," who would quietly inspect the room and then dive for a bottle of bourbon he kept in his lower desk drawer; Barney Lefferts, who spent his spare time writing scurrilous "I Worked with Him" obituaries about his colleagues surrounding him. A colorful world, I must admit. The three-martini lunch was the normal way of life.

Lewis, slim, somewhat formal, in his cramped office near the entrance to the room, dealt with us all with unfailing courtesy and a ready wit. He acted that way partly as balm, for there were many bruised egos in that room; we weren't exactly working for a scout leader.

Of the editors I've observed at *Commentary*, *The New Yorker*, and the *New York Times*, Lewis was, above them all, the artist as editor. There was a style and a swagger to the way he worked, and a pleasure he took in getting the details right. He affected the normal anti-intellectualism of the newspaper office, but in fact had a keen eye for trends in the arts and in the culture. When Susan Sontag published her "Notes on Camp" in *Partisan Review*, pointing to a new style and a new sensibility in the culture, Lewis recognized that as news and we covered it in the *Magazine*, as we covered the significant differences between the way law was taught at Yale and Harvard, or the emergence of the then obscure religious philosopher Martin Buber. All of this is routine stuff today when stories on intellectual trends abound in the daily paper. But it wasn't so then.

Lewis also saw to it that we didn't take ourselves too seriously. When I was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship in poetry in 1967, Lewis presented me

## TRIBUTE

with what appeared to be a copy of my most recent book, but which in fact contained parody versions of almost everything in it. It took me a while to appreciate that.

I served as his assistant editor from the late 60s to 1975. We had many fights, adjudicated by Dan Schwarz, all of them cleanly fought, I believe, and for the betterment of the *Magazine*.

He was distinguished by a fierce independence and a total unwillingness to play corporate politics.

He has been missed and he will be missed.

*Harvey Shapiro is a poet and former editor of the New York Times Book Review.*

### Ted Morgan

The last time I was on the tip of Cape Cod was August 1986, visiting Lewis and Marybeth. Since I didn't know Provincetown very well, Lewis gave me a tour, acting like the narrator in *Our Town*, showing me points of interest. Later we had a drink at The Red Inn, and Lewis ordered a martini with the olive on the side, which I took to be a sort of editor's tic, a need to separate the essential from the peripheral.

I wrote quite a few articles for Lewis between 1967 and 1976, and now, looking back on those years, I wonder why I did. It certainly wasn't the money. I think I kept doing it because I liked working with Lewis. It was a way of keeping the friendship going. I continued to write for him after he left the *Times* and edited that magazine that the Conference Board put out, *across the board*.

And what I assume that the *Times* did not appreciate about Lewis was precisely what I did like. His spirit of irreverence, his sense of the absurd, his constant kidding around. He once called me to say he had an assignment for me—Kim Philby had surfaced in Moscow, and there was only one reporter he would talk to, and that was me. I was halfway to the Russian embassy to get my visa before I realized he was putting me on. Another time, he asked me to do a piece on the last trip of the liner

*France*. I would fly to Cannes, where I would board the liner for the journey to New York. This time, I thought he was putting me on, but this time it was real, except that Lewis said, "We're having serious problems, so you'll have to go steerage."

And that was why I loved working for him, because he instilled a spirit of fun into everything, so that there was no more distinction between what was serious and what was not, because with Lewis, everything was fun, and everything was serious. And I must tell you that this is a trait that one does not encounter too often in the course of a lifetime. It was what my friend Eileen Bresnahan recognized at once and called "high mischief."

Over lunch at Sardi's one day, he told me about someone at the *Times* whose career he had helped and who now was turning against him, and he said, "People never forgive you the favors you do them."

I said, "as La Rochefoucauld put it." "Well," Lewis said, "I thought of that on my own, long before I read La Rochefoucauld. This is what happens again and again. I think of something, but someone else got there ahead of me." Once again, he was kidding, but he was serious.

I can remember only one occasion when he departed from his usual tone. I had done a story on Eldridge Cleaver, who had moved his Black Panther movement to Algiers. Cleaver agreed to be interviewed on condition that a short statement by him would appear as a preface to the article. When I got back to New York, I had lunch with Lewis, who said, "I have a bone to pick with you." He then told me that the boys upstairs were furious that the *Magazine* had been used for Cleaver's statement. They had landed pretty hard on Lewis, who had defended me saying it was either that or no article, while in fact he felt I had made a mistake in giving in to Cleaver's demands.

But after a few minutes, Lewis was back in character, telling me about other reactions to the story. The cover of the *Magazine* showed Eldridge Cleaver looking like a sort of black and bearded Mus-

solini, with a fierce expression, a black uniform, a holstered gun on his belt, and an arm-band with a leaping panther on it. Lewis said he had seen two black men in the street looking at the cover, had eavesdropped on their conversation, and had heard one man say to the other: "There he goes, on his way to his job at the post office."

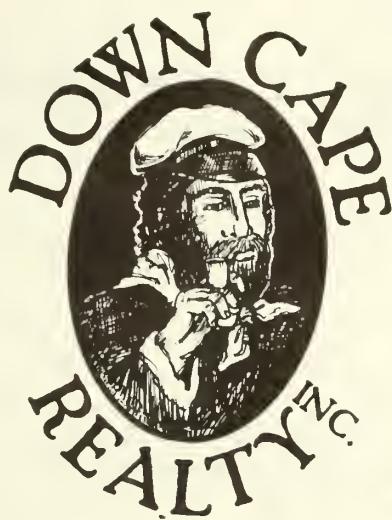
To conclude, I would like to paraphrase Toots Shor's remark about Jimmy Walker: We'll miss you, Lewis, because you brightened up the place.

*Ted Morgan, a Pulitzer Prize winner, is the biographer of Somerset Maugham, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Sir Winston Churchill, and William Burroughs.*

### Stanley Kunitz

Lewis was a brilliant editor with an intuitive grasp of values and an unerring sense of style. He was a keen and often sardonic observer of the contemporary scene, a deflater of pomposity, witty, inventive, irrepressible. He was a wonderfully loyal friend and the best of company.

*The poet Stanley Kunitz, whose most recent book is Next-to-Last Things, was Lewis Bergman's next-door neighbor for many years in Provincetown. □□*



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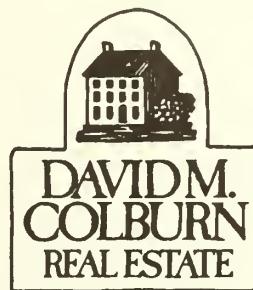
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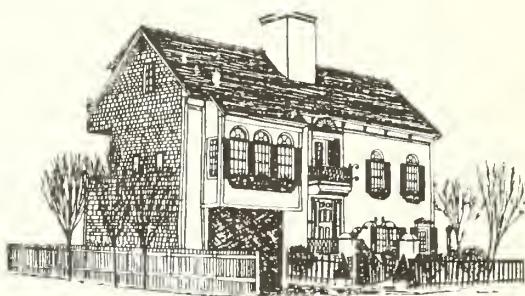
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## CROSSOVER DREAMS

(continued from page 83)

that I never really had time to think about it. When you get into the SAB [School of American Ballet, NYCB's training arm], you get totally caught up in it. By the time you're 15, all you want to do is join the company."

But there is a high price to pay for such single-minded devotion, and Bentley paid it. After five or six years in the corps, "I began to realize that I was unhappy dancing. I wasn't as good as I should have been, and I wasn't able to give my dancing what I wanted to. I was too caught up in my vanity, which is why I wasn't dancing as well as I should."

"A dancer," she wrote in her diary, "is like an artist, his art is his communication. The result of my lack of communication: I become a body in motion without meaning for the audience because I have no meaning for myself."

Her dancer's image, cultivated and refined to a high polish after thousands of hours in front of a mirror, suffered from a lack of identity, a lack of conviction. "Everyone goes through it [at NYCB]," she says. "Some people take a different track. It's often associated with weight gain. The thinking starts the weight gain, not the other way around. Me, I was feeling fat in my head."

Bentley, who is toothpick thin, rebelled in another way—she started thinking too much. "Mr. B. [Balanchine] always said, 'Don't think, just do.' I could never do that. I think too much, far too much, to dance."

She started reading philosophy, Samuel Johnson, Thomas Mann, and Gautier. She fell in love with Wagner, and haunted the Metropolitan Opera House next door. She kept a diary. "My diary was just an attempt to figure it all out. It was a justification for everything, an attempt to explain myself to myself. It wasn't just about dancing, it was about me." In a way, it was the most radical rebellion for a Balanchine dancer, to think so much. Writing in the third person, she told her diary:

Her notebooks, to this day, retain the story of her desperate attempt to hold together her self, her mind, her reason, her order, her morals.

She began writing when she was 19, and wrote volumes. The diaries are as dramatic as one might expect from a sensitive young woman emerging into the world, but they contain a kernel of keen perception and self-awareness that is engaging. And, of course, they provide the vicarious pleasure of insight into the private and enigmatic world of ballet as defined by Mr. B., "the only living genius in the world today—an artist and a god."

Bentley needed money to pay for a studio apartment she had purchased in Paris, and her mother, who had done her typing, thought she should try to sell the diaries. A member of the NYCB board looked at them and passed them on to an editor-friend at Random House. The result was *Winter Season: A Dancer's Journal*, which covers the company's three month season in the fall and winter of 1980-1981.

The book was an immediate success, full of evocative moments, both tender and tragic, that gave voice to Bentley's commitment and her pain at its failure to enable her to transcend

her limitations. In it, Bentley mixes intimate details of the dancer's life with an account of her ongoing struggle to come to grips with "the frightening world outside the theatre—real life." It is a painful and sometimes bitter story of her attempt to claim some of the beauty for herself that she sees so clearly in others, without sacrificing the power to doubt its truth.

Before the book came out in 1982, the diaries had done their work—Bentley was convinced that she had to leave NYCB.

"I forced myself to face the fact that I refused to face every day; I am going nowhere. I can stay and stagnate, or I must change my life. My faith in dancing is gone, but my faith in life cannot be, or else I would not be here writing this page. Do I have the courage to question and discard the only security I know in order to find one greater and more lasting?"

She lasted only three months on the outside. "It was awful. The first two days were great, and then I was miserable. Life is just life, and dancing is a lot better." She returned with a renewed commitment, no longer a doubter. The publication of her book was an additional boost, although she encountered some jealousy from company members. And Mr. B., the person whose opinion she valued most in the world, seemed to approve, but Bentley refuses to elaborate on his comments. Like most other members of Mr. B.'s company, Bentley really does think of Mr. B. as an omniscient, impenetrable god.

"He needs to see only one demi-*plie*, and he knows how you dance, how you live, who you are and what your future is. When he speaks, his every word is sucked into us as prophetic, though afterwards we often cannot find the meaning—perhaps because it is so simple."

When a dancers' strike (because of low pay) threatened, she was one of many who felt it blasphemous.

"Those who love themselves more than Balanchine have made this stand and demonstrated their lack of faith in him. They cry that they have belief in him as an artist but not as their dictator. But how can one separate the two when his art can be produced only out of a state that he alone must rule? It's a pity he needs a hundred individuals as his tools rather than paintbrushes. What would happen if Van Gogh's brushes one day had refused to be manipulated because they wanted better living conditions?"

But, despite Bentley's renewed commitment, she was not destined to dance. A nagging hip injury became arthritis in 1983, forcing her out for one year. Although she tried to ignore it for nearly two years after that, she was forced to retire permanently in 1986. "I was devastated," she says. "I was dancing better than ever."

Through it all, Bentley continued to write, although her writing had no affect on her decision to stop dancing. It didn't make the transition from writing to dancing any easier, either. "I had no choice. I didn't think, 'Thank God, I've got something else.' The bottom just fell out of my life." She says some of the other company members thought she was leaving to "become a famous writer, but they were the lucky ones. They were still dancing."

## Crossover Dreams

Still, there was the writing to fall back on. "I never learned how to write, but I had a lot to say, and I couldn't say it on stage. We dancers may not be able to talk, but God knows, we know. I still can't spell, can't punctuate—English was my worst subject in school—but that's just a matter of lots of practice, just like dance."

After she left in 1986, Bentley suffered an intense identify crisis. "As always, one day without dancing and one feels one is no longer a dancer. After all, there is no proof that one can dance unless one is dancing! Now that I've stopped for good, I ask myself, 'Can I still say I'm a dancer?' I never say I'm a writer now, I just do it. I don't even like the idea of myself as a writer, and I hope I never consider myself that way. I'm a dancer who writes, that's all."

She does acknowledge her strengths as a writer, although she attributes them to her training as a dancer. "I was more disciplined as a dancer than I am as a writer. The book was a hoot, a lark. But writing is easy, and dancing never was. I probably learned the discipline from all those years of training. Since I have to look for another profession, I know it will be writing." She laughs ruefully, "I was probably a frustrated writer all along."

A second book about dance—she will not say what it is, other than that it is not a continuation of her diaries—is due out soon. Her diaries are still a mainstay for her, a source of self-examination and growth. The bitterness of her thwarted career as a dancer is beginning to bring Bentley some insights into why she chose to write. "I always had so much trouble with that ridiculous pride, of looking in the mirror and not being satisfied. I always felt the gaps between what I wanted to do and what I could do. Writing fills in all the gaps; it's so much the opposite of dancing. It's not in the moment, and I could never get in the moment like Mr. B. wanted us to. Oh, sometimes, when I'm writing I'll be in the moment, but I really don't care about how I look in my writing the way I did in dance. Maybe that's why I can do it so well."

Although he died in 1983, George Balanchine is at the core of Bentley's decision to stop dancing and pursue writing. "Mr. B. had everything to do with it. He started by giving me something to question. I always felt I wasn't there the way he wanted me to be there. And that with the book, maybe I was."

She still feels the lure of the apostle's commitment to the true calling—Balanchine and dance. "If I can be of service to what I love as a writer, then that's O.K. If I can't dance, then I can explain. That's still in service to the big thing. I feel like I'm supposed to write, like I'm supposed to use my experience in NYCB in some way."

Her next project will be co-authoring NYCB star Suzanne Farrell's autobiography. After that, she thinks, she may be ready to venture into non-dance subjects. But at heart, Toni Bentley still thinks of herself as a dancer.

"Dancing has created the disposition in me to be creative. It is an education that is conducive to creativity. I have the background and the discipline, but dancing is not serving my purpose. . . . I guess you have to be an unhappy dancer to write at all. If I were totally at peace dancing, I would have nothing to say. Those

moments of pure, silent inner joy and peace have no words and do not demand any thoughts. A happy dancer is silent, proof of his or her peace is in that silence, devoid of all need to talk."

Despite her lack of training, Bentley is gathering her strength to turn to her new career. She credits her years with the NYCB, however painful they may have been, with her current success. "I know I wouldn't have known how to write if I hadn't known how to dance."

What do these artists have in common? Very little, on the surface. Their careers are as disparate as their personalities. But all seem to have considered an element of practicality in their choices. They recognized their limitations in one field, and applied previously acquired discipline and rhythms to another.

Carmen Cicero says he is lucky to have two talents. Alec Wilkinson was easily resigned to the fact that his first career was not realistic. Toni Bentley reluctantly left her true calling.

Another dancer-turned writer says, "Of course, a dancer who writes is no more a contradiction in terms than a writer who moves. They occur naturally, and in tandem, as do all forms of expression when combined with discipline. It's finding where the propensity lies that's the key to a successful conversion. Now, instead of cursing my limitations, I am satisfied by what I'm doing. There's a real wisdom in that." □□

*Jill Bloom is a former dancer and the author of 25 novels and four non-fiction books. Her most recent book, Help Me to Help My Child, A Parents' Guide to Learning Disabilities, will be published by Little Brown in July.*

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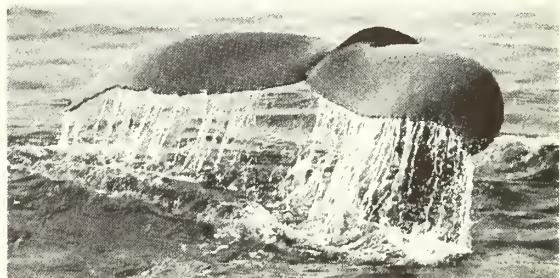


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## LEE FALK

(continued from page 117)

**Hyde.** Why didn't I think of that?

In answer to what was the inspiration for the Phantom's costume, I would have to say that Robin Hood was one of my boyhood heroes. Originally I envisioned the Phantom's costume as green, but I didn't specify that for the color Sunday pages. The color artists made it purple, which is kind of silly for running around in the jungle. In Europe they made him red. When I met the man responsible, I asked him why red. He said that the mechanicals came over in black and white. They didn't know what color to make him, and they had a lot of red ink.

**RE:** I remember two stories you told me that are indicative of the impact a strip can have. One was about a cruise ship highjacking, and the other concerned the use of the Phantom as a secret code during the Nazis occupation of Norway. Could you elaborate?

**LF:** I once wrote a story about a cruise ship that was plying the waters down in the Caribbean. A gang had come aboard as passengers, and disguised themselves with goggles to highjack the ship. I called them the "Goggle-eyed Pirates." First they took over the radio room, then the engine room to stop the ship. They broke open the captain's safe, then they went from room to room collecting money and jewels. They put everything into sacks. A helicopter came down on deck to collect the sacks. The pirates threw their guns and disguises overboard and disappeared back into their cabins to blend in with the other passengers. That's the story that appeared in the strip. About two or three months later, a Portuguese cruise ship near Brazil, was taken over by some men—actually it was a political act against Salazar, the Portuguese dictator. But the script they followed was almost identical to my story. *Midnight:* they take over the radio room. 1:00 AM: they take over the wheel. 2:00 AM: they take over the engine room. My original story was reprinted in the papers. They showed a picture of the Portuguese ship and our drawing of a cruise ship—identical. The highjackers ultimately escaped to a rather obscure African port

called Bengala, which is similar to the fictitious country where the Phantom lives, Bengal. So people wondered if the highjackers were inspired by my strip. That was fifteen years ago.

The other story happened in Norway during the Nazis occupation. The Germans maintained strict censorship. In the Norwegian papers they were printing that New York was being bombed, Washington was bombed, and so forth. Meanwhile, Sweden, which was neutral, was printing *The Phantom*. They were smuggling the mats for *The Phantom* across the border into Norway, and *The Phantom* was appearing in the Norwegian papers every day. Now my comic strips had never appeared in Germany, so the Germans were not familiar with them. But the Norwegians all knew that *The Phantom* came from America, and they assumed that if *The Phantom* was appearing in their papers every day, then things couldn't be too bad in America. They all thought this was a great joke on the Germans—that an American strip would appear in their heavily censored newspapers. So the Norwegian underground adopted *The Phantom* as one of their passwords.

Ironically, while this was happening, I was at the Office of War Information in Washington, not the cloak and dagger part, but war propaganda. We were in constant communication with the OSS, helping them prepare and send messages into Europe. We were flying messages into Norway, parachuting them in, risking people's lives, none of us knowing that *The Phantom* was going in every day. I didn't find out about *The Phantom* appearing in Norway until after the war. So *The Phantom* has an enduring fan club in Norway.

I should also add that they have a Phantom Fan Club in Scandinavia, which I am told is the biggest youth movement in Scandinavia—bigger than the Boy Scouts. Isn't that amazing. 140,000 members. The King of Sweden was a member of the Phantom Fan Club as a boy. In fact, just outside of Stockholm, they have a Phantom theme park, sort of like Disneyland, but much more modest. They gave me a tour of the park, which included a replica

of the Skull cave. The entrance to the cave is behind a waterfall, just like in the strip. Inside they have the various chambers: the radio room, the treasure room, and so forth. And in the radio room they had a panel set in the wall with various buttons. One said Peking, another London, and there was one blank button. So I said, "Here let's make this one Truro." I wrote Truro under the button. My guide said, "What's there?" I said, "The Phantom's tennis court."

**RE:** *The Phantom* has been in existence for over 50 years. It must feel strange to see your fantasies take on a kind of tangible reality. The Phantom's world must feel like a real place to you.

**LF:** That's true. I built a world for the Phantom and characters. The Phantom has a place in this jungle and he has several houses in America, Europe, one at Golden Beach, and so forth. Mandrake is quite different. He has always lived out of hotel rooms. No special background.

*The Phantom* comes out of the world of classical heroes, which was my world as a boy. All the great heroes of the Greek and Roman myths. And my answer to *The Phantom's* world-wide popularity is that *The Phantom* touches on the mythology of all cultures. This was not accidental, I tried to make him that way.

In fact, I didn't give him eyes. That is, you can't see his eyes. When I first created him I was thinking of the Roman and Greek busts of heroes, whose eyes were blank. If you put eyes in the Phantom it changes the whole appearance. The lack of eyes gives him a god-like image.

**RE:** Your characters are so strongly developed at this point that they must tell you how they would react to any given situation.

**LF:** That's quite true. I can't have the Phantom do what Mandrake does, and vice versa. They speak quite differently. Mandrake's much stiffer, he's more austere and sophisticated. The Phantom is not. The Phantom is a down-to-earth fellow with a nice sense of humor. In all these years, despite the violence that exists in today's comic books, I've never had the Phantom shoot or kill anybody. He carries

## LEE FALK

two guns which he uses quite a bit, but he never hits anybody, despite the fact that he's a dead-eye shot. He always hits his opponents guns, or knives, or rifles. Shoots them right out of their hands. He has never shot an animal, except to save his own life.

Mandrake, of course, never had this problem, as his weapon is hypnosis. He could turn a gun into a banana, or even the gunman into a banana. So he also avoids violence.

In the beginning Mandrake's magic was real. If he gestured at the ceiling, it really fell in; if he turned someone into a rat, they really were a rat. After six months I realized that this could become very difficult. If Mandrake is so great, how could anybody oppose him. So I changed him gradually, without saying anything, from a magician to a hypnotist.

**RE:** So you were also the first one to realize that super heroes had to have their weaknesses, their Achilles heel.

**LF:** Superman had to conquer this problem.

**RE:** Did you know the creators of *Superman*.

**LF:** Sure.

**RE:** My understanding is that they had sold all *Superman* rights to their publisher, and were destitute when the first *Superman* movies appeared.

**LF:** One of them was blind, and the other had continued working, but neither of them was well-off. When the film rights were purchased by Warner Brothers, a group of cartoonists, including Jerry Robinson, raised a big fuss, and the creators of *Superman* were put on a pension for life.

**RE:** Did Mandrake and the Phantom ever meet?

**LF:** Just once, at the Phantom's wedding.

**RE:** As I recall you and the Phantom got married at the same time. Sort of a double wedding. I remember the *People* magazine photo of you in a Phantom costume and Elizabeth in her wedding dress.

**LF:** Well, there have been 21 generations of the Phantom, and consequently, many marriages, but none received as much attention as the last one. Joe Connolly used to say to me, "If you have a successful formula, stick with it. If you drift away from

it, you drift out of the newspapers." I had played with the idea of the current Phantom getting married for a long time. It was implicit in the story since he had to have heirs to carry on the tradition. After all he had been engaged to Diana for over 40 years. So finally I did it. It turned out to be a very glamorous affair. The press all over the world picked up the story. I didn't realize they'd do that. In Stockholm, for instance, they had a huge stag party the night before the wedding. It was also picked up as a feminist story, because Diana refused to give up her job at the United Nations and move into the Skull Cave. In New Zealand they debated this issue in the House of Parliament. I have a transcript of the debate.

I guess that pretty much covers the strips. They're still doing well, they pay the rent and the oil bills. ☐☐

## BiNATIONAL

(continued from page 135)

if you are of another generation, or if you weren't connected to that particular movement, that may seem like nothing to you. But if you were there, it carried tremendous weight, because we all knew exactly what he meant. Everyone there was a painter. They had that cohesion of all being painters. They all thought they were like Velazquez and Piero della Francesca and Chardin. That gave them a kind of unity which, now, is not quite the same. Therefore, I think, panels like this might be even more necessary." ☐☐

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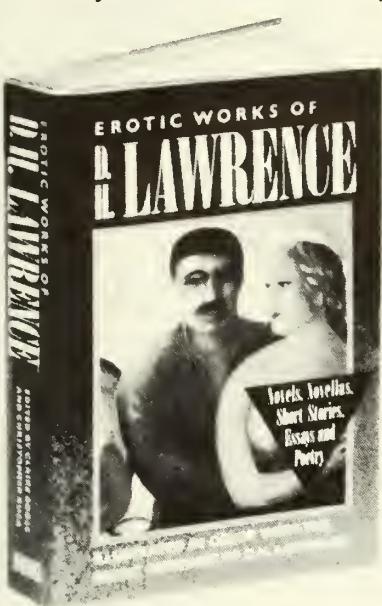
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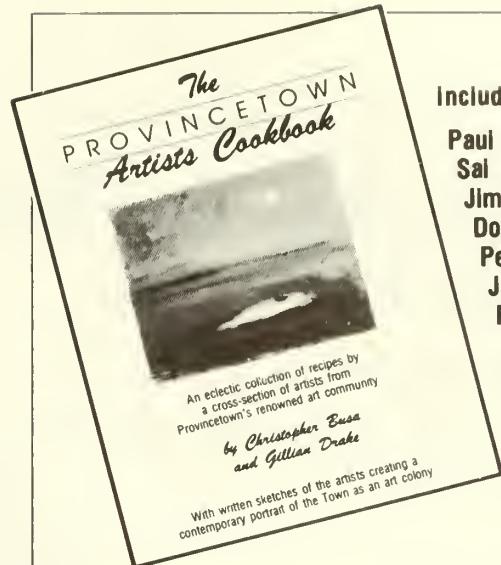
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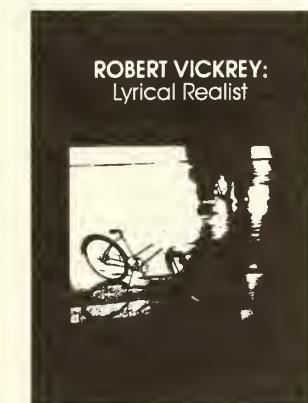
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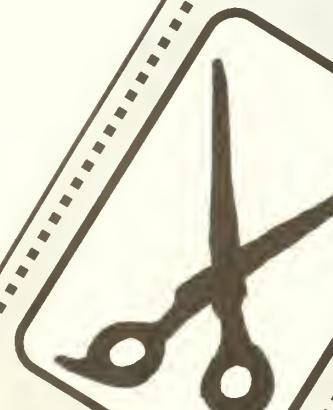
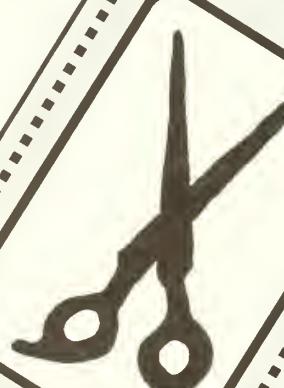
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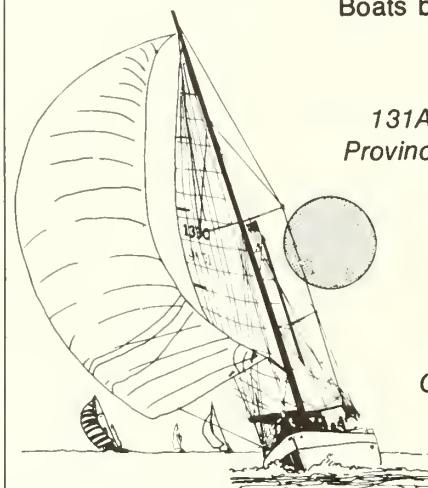
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## ANNA POOR

(continued from page 79)

ingly similar signals. Finding a culturally uncluttered viewer today is impossible. At the same time, as Poor says, "It's so clear that nothing is universal."

More straightforward imagery is one way of dealing with this issue, though it means an artist must sometimes abandon subtlety as well as singularly personal agendas. One of Poor's frequently misunderstood symbols, she says, is her large baseball bat, stiffly upright and painted gleaming gold. "It's a weapon, but people see it as meaning I'm a baseball fan, or as very humorous and whimsical. I don't see anything whimsical about either myself or my work, but that's a danger. It's difficult making your work talk about serious things without alienating your viewer."

Poor's single-word didactic in this case may confuse the issue further. At the bottom of her bat is the word "passion." She says she intended the meaning as longing for "unconscious wealth" and that it alludes to the bat's gilded coating. For many viewers, however, "passion" means just one thing. For them, the word endows the bat with comic phallic reference, designating it less a weapon and more perhaps an homage to Wade Boggs.

"The word chosen for the bat," Poor says, "isn't really descriptive of how I feel about it, but I think maybe I didn't want to be that descriptive. The gold leaf makes it a different kind of lustful object. The titles change; they are flexible. It's often a matter of 'How clear do I want to be?'"

Some of her word titles are contradictory. Two seemingly related objects, a light bulb and a flashlight, are paired respectively with titles that are nearly opposites—"fear" and "hope." The light bulb is linked to fear, she says, through some association with "fear of knowledge"; while the flashlight has to do simply with creating light in darkness, thus is a positive symbol. These contradictory titles might be unconscious illustrations of that push-me-pull-you effect that Poor is after. They reveal the vagaries within similar objects even when they spring from the same source—Poor's subconscious mind. "The titles," she explains, "are very much chosen

subconsciously."

On a conscious level, Poor has begun to choose symbols whose content is more overt, less subtle, and less in danger of being misunderstood. Large guns, knives, and a hypodermic needle, all pieces under progress when this interview was done, certainly carry upfront messages of threat, violence, and despair. And yet these items have a primitive allure that defies the most pacific conscience. Ask any parent who declines to give their children guns, who discourages violent play, and if they are honest, they will tell you their children simply make their own guns and weapons out of anything at hand. Even imaginary guns empower them, allowing them to wrest at least imaginary control over their destiny. Children too are perennially fascinated by the hypodermic, that instrument of torture wielded "for their own good." If adults who view Poor's large carved weapons or hypodermic are first hit by current cultural associations, street thugs, junkies, AIDS, or maybe the National Rifle Association, perhaps the inner child will awaken to some resonance of these primitive fascinations. Poor's crude carving marks and appealing, childlike colors also talk to that inner child, reminiscent as they are of childish craft, while adult knowledge of the chaos such items now embody sets up repelling tension.

Poor is at a turning point, she concedes. "I just want to get to a level of emotional impact with the big pieces that I seem to be able to reach with the small pieces because they are narrative and tell a story. I want the big pieces to have a certain history and a certain meaning so that people walk in and see them in terms of power, not just, 'Oh look, honey, there's a big knife.' "

"It's my responsibility to make the pieces communicate what I want them to communicate. It is important to me. I don't want them to just be seen as dormant objects. I want these to be disturbing. And they are. They are disturbing to me. Part of the awkwardness, the folk quality of them I find is also disturbing to people. Everything is a little off-whack, like a room that's been built without a straight-

edge."

There may be something "a little off-whack" about contemporary audiences that makes choosing and rendering effective symbols today extra difficult. Perhaps our society's media bombardment corrupts the innocence of the inner child at too early an age. Perhaps contemporary audiences lack the allusional powers to deal with subtle symbols, numbed as they are by consumerized banality constantly hyped as "art" (a state of chaos if ever there was one). These two possibilities alone mean that contemporary symbols, which must be simple and attractive, are apt to attract the mass of simple-minded but consumer-jaded viewers, few of whom harbor Anna Poor's (or Alice's) innate artistic innocence. If there is no inner child, no receptive subconscious to receive the resonance, they will get only what they see.

Jeff Koons, another maker of enlarged objects, tackles the banality of our consumer culture head-on with a brilliant send-up. By wrapping up his outsized porcelain and polychromed wood figurines of Michael Jackson, children's television-related toys, nude women, and other "hyped products" as both kitsch and current cultural symbols and putting enormous "fine art" prices on them, Koons cleverly sidestepped the above dilemmas. And his smile—a bit like the Cheshire cat's—has lingered, as they say, all the way to the bank.

Like Alice, Poor sees no humor in absurdity; she is aware that innocence and logic are no match for chaos, and yet she remains insular, "totally obsessed," doing her art "in somewhat of a vacuum," and on her "own path" through a contemporary wonderland. Curiously, one still roots for the innocents to prevail—for artists who just might create symbols that speak on equal terms to both the ordinary and profound, and like Lewis Carroll, will still ring true a hundred years from now. □□

*Ann Lloyd lives on Cape Cod and writes primarily about art. Her articles have appeared in Contemporanea, The Boston Globe, Art New England, Cincinnati Arts and Provincetown Arts.*



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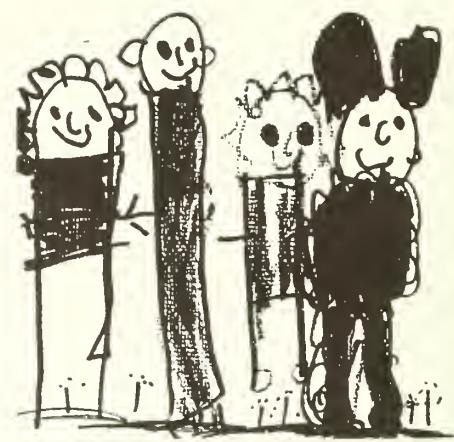
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# The Bear and the Two Lovely Children

by Tessa Rudd



The Bear and  
the Two Lovely Children

For my Daddy

1  
One day Geordie and I went into  
the forest.



2  
Purple Pickle Pepper Press  
The Storybook School  
North Truro, Ma.  
Copyright April 1989



We saw a lot of trees.



3  
Then we saw a bear.



4  
The bear ate us up.

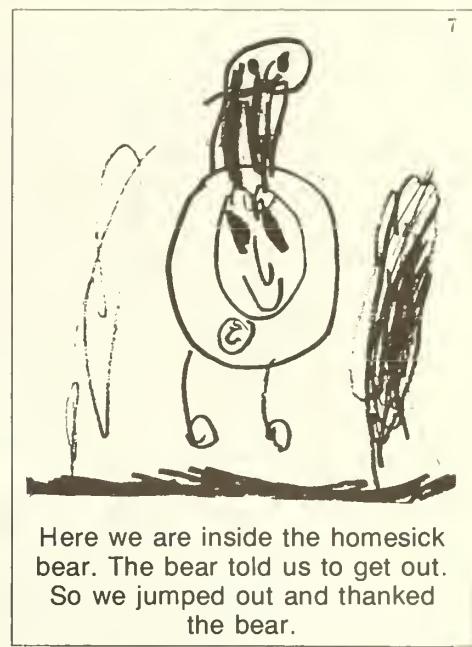
## The First Story



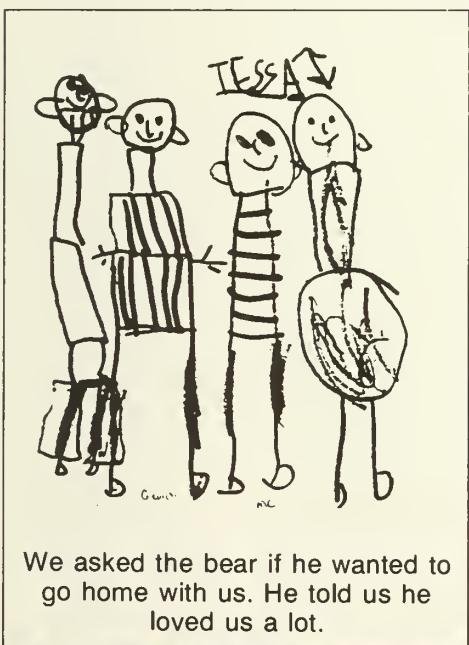
Geordie was scared inside the bear's tummy and I was excited in the bear's tummy.



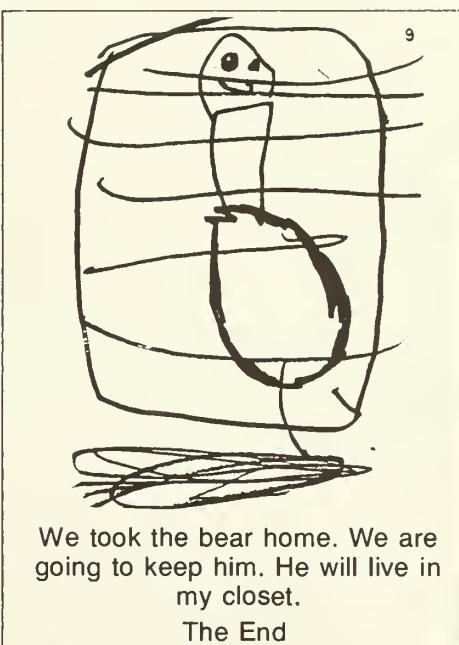
The bear got homesick. He wanted to go in his cave.



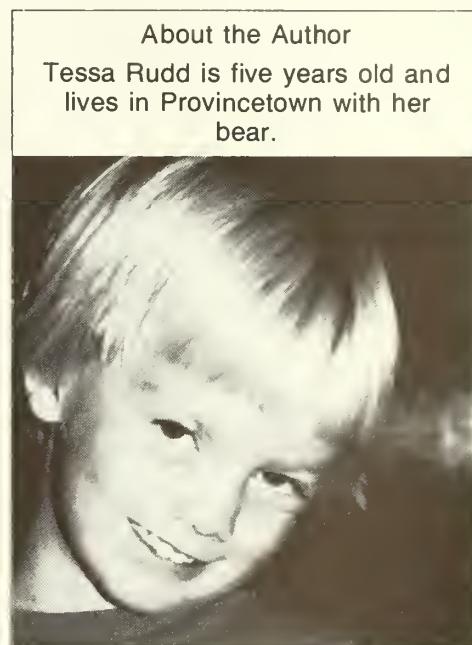
Here we are inside the homesick bear. The bear told us to get out. So we jumped out and thanked the bear.



We asked the bear if he wanted to go home with us. He told us he loved us a lot.



We took the bear home. We are going to keep him. He will live in my closet.  
The End



### The Storybook School

Rudelle Falkenburg runs the Storybook School out of her home in North Truro, a rambling cottage filled to the brim with colorful objects and toys chosen to capture a small child's imagination. "What interests and excites the child, excites me," she says, and explains that she follows Marie Montessori's philosophy of involving all the senses in the learning process. Listening to stories, drawing pictures from them, and telling and illustrating their own stories, Rudelle feels, is one way to reach each child. "Not every child can learn to read and write in preschool, but they can learn the value of stories." During the year at Rudelle's school before Kindergarten, each of her students writes and illustrates his or her own story, which Rudelle assembles into a book, complete with a photograph of the author.

Rudelle's flower-filled garden is the school yard; with trees to climb, chickens to feed and a Peter-Hunt painted tree house to play in, this must seem like paradise to the children fortunate enough to be here.

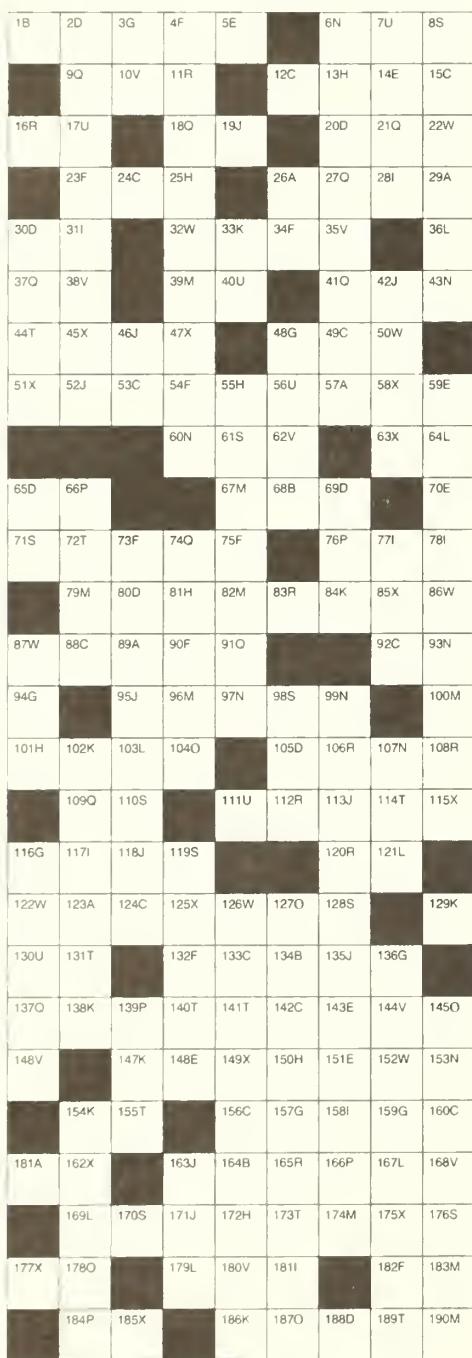
# THE LAST WORD - E. J. KAHN, JR.

E. J. Kahn, Jr. has been writing for *The New Yorker* for over 50 years. He has written 27 books, including two memoirs in which he confesses his addiction to the *New York Times'* crossword puzzles (his most recent book is *Year of Change: More About The New Yorker & Me*). Though he usually manages to master the *Times'* puzzle in 10 minutes or less, he claims that he required 49 hours to create this acrostic, his first for publication.

To complete the puzzle, guess the words defined below and write the answers in the numbered spaces. Then transfer each letter of the guessed words to the correspondingly numbered squares in the diagram. When the diagram is completely filled in it will

contain a quotation from a published work, reading normally from left to right. The black boxes indicate the ends of words. In addition, the first letters of the guessed words will spell out the author and title of the quoted work.

If this puzzle proves vexing, and you want us to supply the answer, we will be happy to do so on request. All we ask in return is that you subscribe for two issues of *Provincetown Arts*, by sending \$10 to P.O. Box 35, Provincetown, MA 02657. On the other hand, if you send us a correctly completed copy of this puzzle you will be eligible for a free subscription to the magazine. Good luck!



- A. Petit Four
- B. Mexican Bombshell (First name only)
- C. Sounds like power unit, but it's the reverse (2 wds)
- D. Attract a fish (Biblically)
- E. What puzzles like this are fated, for many, to be
- F. Unctuous
- G. Take the lower case out of slip cover and sample again
- H. Rough going at the opera? (2 wds)
- I. Not down country
- J. Old-fashioned candy staple (2 wds)
- K. Bounce off
- L. Heading for points south-east? You're on track. (3 wds., abbrs.)
- M. One way of treating diseases
- N. Out of this world
- O. Romany
- P. To importune in an anteroom?
- Q. Pertaining to vision
- R. Deeply respectful
- S. Not my ego
- T. Passing on, citing
- U. L'il Annie
- V. Art lover
- W. Broken down
- X. Pithily, Magisterially

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Peter Shulman, "Mother and Child," 1988

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